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The Three Musketeers

By
Alexandre Dumas

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INTRODUCTION

ALEXANDRE DUMAS once told the Emperor Napoleon III that he had written 1200 volumes. This was certainly an exaggeration. Nevertheless, such was his extraordinary industry, and such the amazing fertility of his inventive mind, that the edition of his collected works which was published in Paris between the years 1860 and 1881 runs to 277 volumes. Dumas is now best remembered for his historical novels, which have made a wide appeal to readers of all ages both in and outside France, particularly in English-speaking countries. Writers like Thackeray, Stevenson and Andrew Lang have paid them glowing tributes. Among these romances none have enjoyed greater popularity than *The Three Musketeers* and its two sequels, *Twenty Years After* and *Ten Years Later, or the Vicomte de Bragelonne*. Of the three the first, which appeared in 1844, is probably the favourite with young readers. Nowhere has Dumas shown to better advantage his unrivalled skill in relating an exciting story. From the moment that the young D'Artagnan leaves his Gascon home in the extreme south of France to seek his fortune in the capital, adventures follow one another thick and fast. His bewilderment and astonished delight upon entering the great world of Paris, his youthful enthusiasm, his eagerness to push his fortunes, his chivalrous courage, his loyalty to his comrades, and his unfailing resourcefulness in the face of apparently unsurmountable obstacles, make him almost an ideal hero. Scarcely less attractive are the great historical figures among whom he moves and upon whom the making or marring of his fortune depends. Chief among these are Cardinal Richelieu and his master Louis XIII, the Queen and the Duke of Buckingham.

If we compare the historical romances of Dumas with those of Scott, we shall find that, except in one or two like *Quentin Durward*, actual history plays a far smaller part in the latter than in the former. It was, in fact, *Quentin Durward* which served as a model for *The Three Musketeers*. On the other hand, the characters of Dumas' own creation are more slightly sketched than the wonderful company drawn from all ranks of life that people Scott's novels. We are told a good deal about D'Artagnan and Milady, but their characters as hero and villain will hardly bear a close scrutiny. We are given little more than a superficial picture of the three musketeers themselves. Athos, perhaps, stands out most clearly. Formerly the Count de la Fère, the deep injury he had sustained through his unhappy marriage had caused him to seek distraction from tormenting memories in active service. High-minded, serious, warm-hearted, utterly fearless, but somewhat addicted to Spanish wine, he is the most attractive of the three comrades. The real names of the vain, sentimental, rather dull-witted, but valourous and muscular Porthos, and of the equally sentimental but more subtle, refined and religiously inclined Aramis, are not revealed to us. The writer is, in fact, more concerned with what his characters do than what they are, and the dramatic description of duels, hazardous journeys, intrigues, hair-breadth escapes, compensates in great measure for the lack of depth and detail in the drawing of character.

For some of these exploits Dumas no doubt drew upon his own experience, for his own life was scarcely less chequered and adventurous than that of any soldier of fortune in his novels. One such exploit may be related. During the revolution of 1830, he tells us in his *Memoires*, at the age of twenty-eight he was sent by La Fayette to Soissons to collect powder for the army. Although practically single-handed, he was more than successful in his mission, for, having gained the good-will of the inhabitants, he compelled the governor of the city to hand over the whole magazine.

The descriptions of natural scenery which fill so many pages in Scott's novels are entirely absent from the work of Dumas. Instead, we are introduced to the stirring, restless life of seventeenth-century Paris, with its population of nearly half-a-million

crowded within an area covering little more than one square mile, with its narrow insanitary streets and lanes, unlighted by night, and haunted by thieves, murderers and criminals of every class, where great nobles had each his fortified palace with a band of armed retainers to defend it and a body of spies to further his intrigues, where, yet, convents and churches, maintained from the proceeds of broad acres, were so numerous that their bells resounding at all hours created an almost unbroken roar of pious thunder "

The events related in *The Three Musketeers* cover the period 1625-1628. The picture that Dumas draws of the conditions prevailing throughout France during that time is substantially correct. In 1589, with the accession to the throne of Henry of Navarre as Henry IV, the Civil Wars which had been waged in the name of religion for the greater part of the sixteenth century came to an end. In 1597 the famous Edict of Nantes assured toleration and freedom of worship to the Huguenots. The reign of Henry IV brought peace, prosperity and wealth to the kingdom, but upon his assassination in 1610 his wife, Marie de' Medici, became regent, and it was not long before the old lawless spirit broke loose again. This was due partly to the weakness of the queen regent and her advisers, but principally to the great power enjoyed by the nobles in the provinces and to the strength of the Huguenot party. The great nobles retained much of the influence they had enjoyed in feudal times, their chateaus were strongly fortified, and their numerous retainers were always ready to follow them even to battle, if necessary, against the king, who was still regarded less as a monarch than as the first peer of the realm. The Huguenots, especially strong in Southern France, had been permitted by the Edict of Nantes to retain in their hands a number of fortified towns, the most important of which was La Rochelle. Moreover, they possessed other rights, religious and political, among which they reckoned the right to declare war, and these they guarded with the greatest jealousy. Unfortunately their powerful organisation was frequently employed by disaffected nobles who had joined them for purely personal ends. Richelieu upon his first entry into power in 1624 at once recognised that the root cause of the disorder in France lay in the political power enjoyed by

the Huguenots, and he determined to crush it. Though a cardinal and a devout catholic, he had no intention of persecuting them. The priest in him was always second to the politician. But it was essential to prevent the continual plots against the king, and the succession of foreign intrigues in which the Huguenots were invariably implicated. The Duke of Buckingham's ill-advised expedition to La Rochelle in July 1627 gave Richelieu his opportunity. La Rochelle with its fifty thousand inhabitants was a place of immense natural strength and great commercial importance. It had a large and safe harbour, and crined a considerable fleet of ships, whereas the King of France at this period had no navy at all. As the city was secured by massive fortifications, strengthened by large bastions, and the surrounding country was covered with vast morasses crossed only by narrow paths, when the citizens wished to revolt they had only to close the gates, as they did in 1627. With the later stages of the famous siege we are not concerned, and the story of it is too well known to need repetition. Suffice it to say that, after Buckingham's disgraceful abandonment of the Rochellais on November 17th, 1627, Richelieu completely surrounded the city with a vast army. By a great dike built across the harbour mouth, which was completed in March 1628, he shut off all access from the sea. On October 28th, 1628, after all attempts to break through the dike had failed, and every hope of assistance from England was dissipated, the city at length surrendered, and the power of the Huguenots as a political force was broken for ever.

The foregoing account will help the reader of *The Three Musketeers* to form some conception of the position of parties in France during the early years of Louis XIII's reign. It will explain to some extent the causes of that general sense of insecurity and the consequent network of intrigue—amazing, yet probably not far from the truth—which the story reveals. Such unquiet times afforded ample opportunities for adventurers of courage and resource, like D'Artagnan and his three companions. Exploits as hazardous as theirs, though not perhaps so uniformly successful, doubtless fell to the lot of many a soldier of fortune who relied upon his wits for his livelihood in the days of the Great Cardinal.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

CHAPTER I

D'ARTAGNAN SETS OUT TO SEEK HIS FORTUNE

ON the first Monday of the month of April, 1625, the city of Meung appeared to be in as complete a state of revolution as if the Huguenots had come to make a second Rochelle of it. Many citizens, seeing the women flying towards the main street, hearing the children crying at the open doors, hastened to arm themselves, and, supporting their somewhat uncertain courage with a musket or a pike, directed their steps towards the hostelry of the Jolly Miller, before which was gathered a rapidly increasing group, noisy and full of curiosity.

In those times panics were common, and but few days passed without some city or other having to record in its annals an event of this kind. There were nobles, who made war against one another, there was the king, who made war against the cardinal, there was the Spaniard, who made war against the king. Then, in addition to these concealed or public, secret or open wars, there were robbers, mendicants, Huguenots, wolves, and lackeys, who made war upon everybody. The citizens were always in arms against thieves, wolves, or lackeys—often against nobles or Huguenots—sometimes against the king—but never against the cardinal or Spain. In accordance, therefore, with this habit, on the aforesaid first Monday of the month of April, 1625, the citizens, hearing the clamour, and seeing neither the red and yellow standard, nor the livery of the Duc de Richelieu, rushed toward the hostelry of the Jolly Miller.

On arriving there, the cause of all this hubbub was obvious to everyone

A young man—let us outline his portrait in a few strokes—imagine Don Quixote at eighteen, Don Quixote without his corselet, without his coat of mail, without his cuisses, Don Quixote clothed in a woollen doublet, the blue colour of which had faded into a nameless shade, face long and brown, high cheek-bones, indicating craftiness, the maxillary muscles enormously developed, an infallible sign by which a Gascon may always be detected, even without his cap—and our young man wore a cap ornamented with a feather, his eye open and intelligent, his nose hooked, but finely chiselled. Too big for a youth, too small for a grown man, an experienced eye might have taken him for a farmer's son upon a journey, had it not been for the long sword, which, dangling from a leathern baldric, knocked against its owner's calves as he walked, and against his steed's rough side when he was on horseback.

For our young man had a steed which was the observed of all observers. It was a Béarn pony, from twelve to fourteen years old, with a yellow coat, but not a hair in its tail, which, though moving always with its head lower than its knees, contrived, nevertheless, to perform its eight leagues a day. Unfortunately, the qualities of this horse were so well concealed under its strangely-coloured hide and its extraordinary gait, that—everybody being in those times a connoisseur in horse-flesh—the appearance of the said pony at Meung, which place it had entered about a quarter of an hour before, by the gate of Beaugency, produced an unfavourable impression that extended to its master.

And this impression was the more painful to young D'Artagnan—for so was the Don Quixote with this second Rosinante named—because he was conscious himself, good horseman as he was, of the ridiculous appearance he made on such a steed. He had sighed deeply, therefore, when accepting the pony as a gift from M. D'Artagnan the elder.

"My son," said the old Gascon nobleman, seasoning his gift with the following valuable advice, "my son, this horse was born in your father's house, about thirteen years ago, and has remained in it ever since. You ought therefore to love it. Never sell it—allow it to die quietly and honourably of old age, and if you take it on a campaign with you, take as much care of it as you would of an old servant. At court, if you ever have the honour to go there," continued M d'Artagnan the elder, "an honour to which, remember, your ancient nobility gives you the right, sustain worthily, both for your own sake and for those who belong to you, your name of *gentleman*, which has been worthily borne by your ancestors for more than five hundred years. Endure nothing from any one except the cardinal and the king. It is by his courage and by his courage alone that a gentleman makes his way to-day. Whoever trembles for a second perhaps allows the prize to escape, which, during that exact second, fortune held out to him. You are young, you ought to be brave for two reasons—first, because you are a Gascon, and secondly, because you are my son. Never fear quarrels, but seek adventures. I have taught you how to handle a sword, you have sinews of iron, a wrist of steel, fight on all occasions, fight all the more because duels are forbidden, and there is, consequently, twice as much courage in fighting. I have nothing to give you, my son, but fifteen crowns, my horse and the advice you have just heard. Your mother will add to them a receipt for a certain balsam, which she got from a gipsy, and which has the miraculous virtue of curing all wounds that do not reach the heart. Make good use of all these, and live happily and long. I have but one more word to add, and that is to propose an example to you—not mine, for I myself have never appeared at court, and have only taken part in the religious wars as a volunteer, I speak of M de Tréville, who was formerly my neighbour, and who had the honour to be as a child the playfellow of our king, Louis XIII, whom God preserve! Sometimes then play degenerated

into fights, and in these fights the king was not always the stronger. The blows which he received from him made him entertain great esteem and friendship for M. de Tréville. Later on, M. de Tréville fought with others during his first journey to Paris, five times, from the death of the late king until the coming of age of the present one, without reckoning wars and sieges, seven times, and from that period up to the present day, a hundred times perhaps. So that in spite of edicts, ordinances, and decrees, you now see him captain of the musketeers—a regiment held in great esteem by the king and dreaded by the cardinal—and it is little that he dreads, as every one knows. Moreover, M. de Tréville receives ten thousand crowns a year, he is, therefore, a very great noble. He began as you begin, go to him with this letter, and make him your model, in order that you may do as he has done.”

Thereupon M. D'Artagnan the elder girded his own sword on his son, kissed him tenderly on both cheeks and gave him his blessing.

On leaving his father, the young man found his mother waiting for him with the famous recipe. The farewells were on this side longer and more tender than they had been on the other, not that M. D'Artagnan did not love his son, who was his only child, but M. D'Artagnan was a man, and he would have considered it unworthy of his sex to give way to his feelings, whereas Madame D'Artagnan was a woman and a mother. She wept profusely, and, to the praise of M. D'Artagnan the younger be it said, notwithstanding the efforts he made to be as firm as a future musketeer ought to be, nature prevailed, and he shed many tears, half of which he had great difficulty in concealing.

The same day the young man set forward on his journey, provided with the three paternal gifts, which consisted, as we have said, of fifteen crowns, the horse, and the letter for M. de Tréville, the advice being thrown into the bargain.

Equipped in this manner, D'Artagnan was an almost exact replica of Cervantes' hero. Don Quixote took windmills for

giants, and sheep for armies, D'Artagnan took every smile for an insult, and every look as a provocation, the result of which was that all the way from Tarbes to Meung his fist was constantly doubled, and his hand, on the average, ten times a day on the hilt of his sword, and yet the fist did not descend upon any jaw, nor did the sword issue from its scabbard. Not that the sight of the wretched pony did not excite numerous smiles on the countenances of passers-by, but since against the side of this pony rattled a sword of respectable length, and as over this sword gleamed an eye rather ferocious than haughty, these passers-by repressed their hilarity, or, if hilarity prevailed over prudence, they endeavoured to laugh only on one side of their faces. D'Artagnan, then, remained majestic and intact in spite of his susceptibility till he came to this unlucky city of Meung.

But there, as he was alighting from his horse at the gate of the Jolly Miller, without any one, host, waiter, or ostler, coming to hold his stirrup or take his horse, D'Artagnan spied, through an open window on the ground floor, a man of fine figure and lofty bearing, but of rather grim countenance, talking with two persons who appeared to listen to him most respectfully. D'Artagnan fancied not unnaturally, that he himself must be the object of their conversation and listened, and this time he was only in part mistaken. He himself was not the subject of remark, but his horse was. The gentleman appeared to be enumerating all its qualities to his listeners, and, the listeners seeming, as I have said, to pay great deference to the narrator, burst into continual fits of laughter. Now, as half a smile was sufficient to awaken the wrath of the young man, the effect produced upon him by this clamorous mirth may be easily imagined.

Nevertheless, D'Artagnan was desirous of examining the appearance of this impertinent personage who was laughing at him. He fixed his haughty eye upon the stranger, and perceived a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, with black and piercing eyes, a pale complexion, a strongly marked

nose and a black and well shaped moustache He was dressed in a doublet and hose of violet colour This doublet and hose, though new, looked creased, as garments do which have been long packed in a travelling bag D'Artagnan noticed all this with the rapidity of a most minute observer, and, doubtless, from an instinctive feeling that this unknown person was destined to have a great influence over his future life

Now, as at the moment when D'Artagnan fixed his eyes upon the man in the violet doublet, the man made one of his slyest and most profound remarks respecting the Bearnesse pony, his two companions burst out laughing, and he himself, though contrary to his custom, suffered a pale smile (if I may be allowed to use such an expression) to steal over his countenance. This time there could be no doubt that D'Artagnan was really insulted Fully convinced of this, he pulled his cap down over his eyes, and endeavouring to copy the court manners he had picked up in Gascony from young travelling nobles, he advanced, with one hand on the hilt of his sword and the other resting on his hip Unfortunately, as he advanced, his anger increased at every step, and, instead of the proper and lofty speech he had prepared as a prelude to his challenge, he found nothing on the tip of his tongue but a gross personality, which he accompanied with a furious gesture

' I say, sir, you, sir, who are hiding yourself behind that shutter!—yes, you, sir, tell me what you are laughing at, and we will laugh together '

The man withdrew his eyes slowly from the horse to its rider, as if he required time to assure himself that such strange reproaches were being addressed to him, then, when he could no longer entertain any doubt of the matter, his eye brows bent slightly, and, after quite a long pause, in a tone the irony and insolence of which it would be impossible to describe, he replied to D'Artagnan.

' I was not speaking to you, sir! '

' But I am speaking to you! ' replied the young man,

exasperated by this mixture of insolence and good manners, of politeness and scorn

The unknown looked at him for a moment longer with his faint smile, and, retreating from the window, came out of the hostelry with a slow step, and stopped in front of the horse within two paces of D'Artagnan. His quiet manner and the ironical expression of his countenance redoubled the mirth of those with whom he had been talking, and who still remained at the window.

D'Artagnan seeing him approach, drew his sword a foot out of the scabbard.

"This horse is decidedly, or rather has been in its youth, a buttercup," resumed the unknown, continuing the remarks he had begun, and addressing himself to his auditors at the window, without seeming in any way to notice the exasperation of D'Artagnan, who, however, remained standing stiffly between them. "It is a colour very well known in botany, but up to the present time very rare among horses."

"There are people who laugh at a horse that would not dare to laugh at the master of it," cried D'Artagnan in a fury.

"I do not often laugh, sir," replied the unknown, "as you may perceive by the expression of my face, but, nevertheless, I insist upon retaining the privilege of laughing when I please."

"And I," cried D'Artagnan, "will allow no man to laugh when it displeases me!"

"Indeed, sir," continued the unknown, more quietly than ever. "Well! that is perfectly right!" and, turning on his heel, was about to re-enter the hostelry by the front gate, under which D'Artagnan, as he came up, had observed a saddled horse standing. But D'Artagnan was by no means content to allow a man who had had the insolence to laugh at him to escape him so easily. He drew his sword clear of the scabbard, and followed him, crying

"Turn, turn, Master Joker, lest I strike you from behind!"

"Strike me!" said the other, turning sharply round and surveying the young man with as much astonishment as

contempt "Come, come, my good fellow, you must be mad!" Then, in a suppressed tone, as if speaking to himself, he continued, "This is annoying. But what a godsend he would be for his Majesty, who is seeking everywhere for recruits for his musketeers!"

He had scarcely finished, when D'Artagnan made such a furious lunge at him that if he had not sprung nimbly backward, it is probable that he would have jested for the last time. The unknown then, perceiving that the matter was going beyond a joke, drew his sword, saluted his adversary, and gravely placed himself on guard. But at the same moment his two companions, accompanied by the host, fell upon D'Artagnan with sticks, shovels, and tongs. This caused so rapid and complete a diversion to the attack that D'Artagnan's adversary, while the latter was turning round to face this shower of blows, sheathed his sword with the same precision as before, muttering as he did so.

"A plague upon these Gascons! Put him on his yellow horse again, and let him be gone!"

"Not before I have killed you poltroon!" cried D'Artagnan, who was putting up a most gallant fight, and never falling back one step before his three assailants, though they continued to shower them blows upon him.

"Another gasconade!" murmured the gentleman. "By my honour, these Gascons are incorrigible! Keep up the dance, then, since he will have it so. When he is tired, he will say that he has had enough of it."

But the unknown did not yet know the headstrong personage he had to deal with, D'Artagnan was not the man ever to cry for quarter. The fight was, therefore, prolonged for some seconds, but at length D'Artagnan, worn out, had his sword struck from his hand by a blow from a stick, and it fell to the ground broken in two pieces. Another blow full upon his forehead, at the same moment, brought him to the ground, covered with blood and almost fainting.

It was at this crisis that people came flocking to the scene

of action from all sides. The host, fearful of consequences with the help of his servants carried the wounded man into the kitchen, where some trifling attention was bestowed upon him.

Meanwhile the gentleman resumed his place at the window, and surveyed the crowd with an ill-concealed expression of impatience, evidently much annoyed by their persistence in remaining there.

"Well, how is that madman?" exclaimed he, turning round as the opening door announced the entrance of the host, who came to inquire whether he was hurt.

"Your Excellency is safe and sound?" asked the host.

"Oh, yes! perfectly safe and sound, my good host, and I now wish to know what has become of our young man."

"He is better," said the host, "he fainted away."

"Indeed!" said the gentleman.

"But before he fainted, he collected all his strength to challenge you, and to defy you while he challenged you."

"Why, this fellow must be a very fiend!" cried the unknown.

"Oh, no, your Excellency!" replied the host with a grin of contempt, "he is not a fiend, for during his fainting we rummaged his valise, and found nothing but a clean shirt and twelve crowns, and yet, as he was fainting, he exclaimed that if this had happened in Paris you should have instantly repented of it, but as it happened here you would only repent of it later on."

"Then," said the unknown, coldly, "he must be some prince of the blood in disguise."

"I have told you this, good sir," resumed the host, "in order that you may be on your guard."

"Did he mention no name in his raving?"

"Yes! he struck his pocket and said: 'We shall see what M. de Tréville will think of this insult offered to his protégé!'"

"M. de Tréville?" said the unknown, becoming attentive, "he struck his pocket as he uttered the name of M. de Tréville?"

Now, my dear host ! while your young man was unconscious you did not fail, I feel sure, to find out what that pocket contained What was there in it ? ”

“ A letter addressed to M de Tréville, captain of the musketeers ”

“ Indeed ! ”

“ It is just as I have the honour to tell your Excellency ”

The host, who was not endowed with great perspicacity, did not notice the expression which his words produced upon the countenance of the unknown The latter arose from the window, upon the sill of which he had been leaning his elbow, and knitted his brows like a man suddenly disturbed

‘ The deuce ! ’ muttered he, between his teeth “ Can Tréville have set this Gascon upon me ? He is very young, but a sword-thrust is a sword-thrust whatever be the age of him who gives it, and a youth is less to be suspected than an older man A weak obstacle is sometimes sufficient to overthrow a great design ”

And the unknown fell into a reverie which lasted some minutes

‘ Host,’ said he, “ could you not contrive to get rid of this fiantic boy for me ? In conscience, I cannot kill him and yet,” added he, with a coldly menacing expression, “ and yet he annoys me Where is he ? ”

“ In my wife’s chamber on the first floor, where they are dressing his wounds ”

‘ His things and his bag are with him ? Has he taken off his doublet ? ’

‘ Everything is down in the kitchen. But if this crazy young fool annoys you—’

‘ To be sure he does He causes disturbance in your hostelry, which respectable people dislike intensely. Go, make out my bill, and call my servant ”

“ What, sir ! do you mean to leave us already ? ”

“ You knew I was going, for I ordered you to get my horse saddled Has it been done ? ”

"Yes, sir, as your Excellency may have observed, your horse is in the great gateway, ready saddled for your departure"

'That is well, do as I have directed you, then'

"What!" said the host to himself, 'can he be afraid of this boy?' But an imperious glance from the unknown stopped him short, he bowed humbly and retired

"Milady must see nothing of this fellow," continued the stranger "She will soon pass by—she is already late I had better get on horseback and go to meet her I should like, however, to know what this letter addressed to Tréville contains"

And the unknown, muttering to himself, directed his steps towards the kitchen

In the meantime, the host, who had no doubt that it was the presence of the young man which was driving the unknown from his hostelry, had gone up to his wife's chamber, and found D'Artagnan fully returned to consciousness. Giving him to understand that the police could deal with him pretty severely for having sought a quarrel with a great lord (for, in the opinion of the host, the unknown could be nothing less than a great lord), he insisted that, notwithstanding his weakness, he should get up and depart as quickly as possible. D'Artagnan, half stupefied, without his doublet, and with his head all swathed in bandages, arose, and, urged on by the host, began to descend the stairs. On reaching the kitchen, the first thing he saw was his antagonist, standing beside the step of a heavy carriage drawn by two large Norman horses, and quietly talking with a woman of from twenty to two-and-twenty years of age, whose head appeared through the carriage window. We have already observed with what rapidity D'Artagnan took in every feature of a face. So now he perceived at a glance that this woman was young and beautiful, and her style of beauty struck him the more forcibly on account of its being totally different from that of the southern countries in which D'Artagnan had hitherto

lived. She was pale and fair, with long curls falling in profusion over her shoulders, had large languishing blue eyes, rosy lips, and hands of alabaster. She was talking with great animation to the unknown.

"His Eminence, then orders me—" said the lady.

'To return instantly to England, and to inform him immediately should the duke leave London."

"And my other instructions?" asked the fair traveller.

"They are contained in this box, which you will not open until you are on the other side of the Channel."

"Very well, and you, what are you going to do?"

"I, oh! I shall return to Paris."

"What, without chastising this insolent boy?" asked the lady.

The unknown was about to reply, but at the moment he opened his mouth, D'Artagnan, who had heard all, rushed forward through the open door.

'This insolent boy will chastise somebody else," cried he, "and I sincerely hope that he whom he means to chastise will not escape him as he did before."

'Will not escape him?" replied the unknown, knitting his brow.

"No, before a woman you would not dare to fly, I presume?"

"Remember," cried milady, seeing the unknown lay his hand on his sword, "remember that the least delay may ruin everything."

"True," cried the gentleman, "begone, then, your way and I will go mine." And bowing to the lady, he sprang into his saddle, her coachman at the same time applying his whip vigorously to his horses. The two speakers thus separated, taking opposite directions, at full gallop.

"Your reckoning! your reckoning!" shrieked the host, whose respect for the traveller was changed into profound contempt on seeing him depart without settling his bill.

"Pay him, booby!" cried the unknown to his servant,

without checking the speed of his horse, and the man, after throwing two or three pieces of silver at the feet of mine host, galloped after his master

"Base coward! false nobleman!" cried D'Artagnan, springing forward after the servant. But his wound had rendered him too weak for such exertion. Scarcely had he gone ten steps when his ears began to tingle, a faintness seized him, and he fell in the middle of the street, still crying

"Coward! coward! coward!"

"He is a coward indeed," grumbled the host, drawing near to D'Artagnan, and endeavouring by a little flattery to make up matters with the young man

"Yes, a base coward," murmured D'Artagnan, "but she, she was very beautiful"

"What she?" demanded the host

"Milady," faltered D'Artagnan, and fainted for the second time

"Ah, well!" said the host, "I have lost two customers, but this one remains, of whom I am pretty certain for some days to come, and that will be eleven crowns gained, at all events"

The reader must remember that eleven crowns was just the amount which remained in D'Artagnan's purse

The host had reckoned upon eleven days of confinement at a crown a day, but he had reckoned without his guest. On the following morning, at five o'clock, D'Artagnan arose, and descending to the kitchen without help, asked for some oil, some wine, and some rosemary, and with his mother's receipt in his hand, composed a balsam with which he anointed his numerous wounds, replacing the bandages himself, and positively refusing the assistance of any doctor. Thanks, no doubt, to the efficacy of the gipsy's balsam, and perhaps, also, thanks to the absence of a doctor, D'Artagnan walked about that same evening, and was almost cured by the morrow

When the time of settlement came, the rosemary, the oil, and the wine were the only expenses the master had

incurred on his own account, as he had preserved a strict abstinence, while on the contrary, the yellow horse by the account of the ostler, had eaten at least three times as much as a horse of its size could reasonably be supposed to have done. But on putting his hand into his pocket, D'Artagnan found nothing there but his little worn velvet purse with the eleven crowns it contained, the letter addressed to M. de Tréville had disappeared.

The young man began to search for the letter with the greatest patience, turning out his various pockets time after time, rummaging and rummaging again in his valise, and opening and closing his purse, but when he became convinced that the letter was lost, he flew, for the third time, into such a rage that it came near costing him a fresh supply of wine, oil, and rosemary, for upon seeing this hot-headed youth so exasperated, and threatening to destroy everything in the establishment if his letter were not found, the host seized a spit, his wife a broom-handle, and the servants the same sticks they had used the evening before.

'My letter of introduction!' cried D'Artagnan, "my letter of introduction! or I will spit you all like so many partridges!"

Unfortunately, in holding out this terrible threat, he had wholly forgotten that his sword had been broken in two in the former conflict, and so when D'Artagnan went to draw his sword in earnest he found himself armed merely with a stump of about eight or ten inches in length, which the host had carefully placed in the scabbard the rest of the blade the master had slyly put on one side to make a larding-pin.

But this loss would probably not have stopped our fiery young man if the host had not reflected that the demand which his guest made was perfectly just.

"But after all," said he, lowering the point of his spit, "where is that letter?"

"Yes, where is that letter?" cried D'Artagnan. "In the first place, I warn you that the letter is for M. de Tréville,

1.] D'ARTAGNAN SETS OUT TO SEEK FORTUNE 15

and it must be found , if it be not quickly found, he will know how to have it found, I'll answer for it ! ”

This threat completed the intimidation of the host. Throwing down his spit, and ordering his wife to do the same with her broom-handle, and the servants with their sticks, he was the first to begin a zealous search for the lost letter.

“ Does the letter contain anything valuable ? ” demanded the host, after a few minutes of useless investigation.

“ Zounds ! I should think it does,” cried the Gascon, who relied upon this letter for making his way at court, “ it contained my fortune . ”

“ Bills upon Spain ? ” asked the disturbed host.

“ Bills upon his Majesty's private treasury,” answered D'Artagnan, who, reckoned upon entering into the king's service through this recommendation, and thought he could make this somewhat hazardous reply without telling a falsehood.

“ The deuce ! ” cried the host, at his wit's end.

“ But it's of no importance,” continued D'Artagnan, with the assurance common to his race, “ it's of no importance, the money is nothing—the letter was everything , I would rather have lost a thousand pistoles than have lost that . ”

Suddenly a ray of light broke in upon the mind of the host, who was cursing loudly upon finding nothing.

“ That letter is not lost ! ” cried he.

“ What ! ” said D'Artagnan.

“ No , it has been stolen from you . ”

“ Stolen ! by whom ? ”

“ By the gentleman who was here yesterday . He went down into the kitchen, where your doublet was . He remained there some time alone . I would lay a wager he has stolen it . ”

“ Do you think so ? ” answered D'Artagnan, but he was not convinced, for he knew better than any one else how entirely personal the value of this letter was, and saw nothing in it likely to tempt anyone to steal it.

"Do you say," resumed D'Artagnan, "that you suspect that impertinent gentleman?"

"I tell you I am sure of it," continued the host, "when I informed him that your lordship was a *protégé* of M de Tréville, and that you even had a letter for that illustrious nobleman, he appeared to be very much disturbed, and asked me where that letter was, and immediately went down into the kitchen, where he knew your doublet was."

"Then he is the thief," replied D'Artagnan. "I will complain to M de Tréville, and M de Tréville will complain to the king." He then drew two crowns majestically from his purse, gave them to the host, who accompanied him cap in hand to the gate, remounted his yellow horse, which bore him without any further accident to the gate of St Antoine at Paris, where his owner sold him for three crowns, which was a very good price, considering that D'Artagnan had ridden him hard on the last stretch.

So D'Artagnan entered Paris on foot, carrying his little packet under his arm, and wandered about till he found an apartment to let on terms suited to the scantiness of his means. This chamber was a little garret in the Rue des Fossoyeurs, near the Luxembourg.

As soon as the earnest-money was paid, D'Artagnan took possession of his lodging, and passed the remainder of the day in sewing on to his doublet and hose some ornamental braiding which his mother had taken off from an almost new doublet of the elder M D'Artagnan, and had given to him secretly. Then he went to the Quai de la Ferraille, to have a new blade put to his sword, and on his return to the Louvre, inquired of the first musketeer he met the way to the mansion of M de Tréville. This was situated, it appeared, in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, in the immediate vicinity of the chamber hired by D'Artagnan, a circumstance which appeared to him to be a happy augury for the success of his journey.

After which satisfied with the way in which he had

conducted himself at Meung, without remorse for the past, confident in the present, and full of hope for the future, he retired to bed, and slept the sleep of the brave

At nine o'clock the next morning he rose in order to repair to the residence of the famous M de Tréville, the third personage in the kingdom, according to the estimation of his father

[D'Artagnan is received by M de Tréville, the captain of the musketeers, who form the chosen bodyguard of King Louis XIII, and are the deadly rivals of the guards of Cardinal Richelieu, the chief minister, but, having offended the three musketeers, Athos, Porthos and Aramis, he is challenged by each in turn to a duel]

CHAPTER II

D'ARTAGNAN ENTERS UPON HIS APPRENTICESHIP

D'ARTAGNAN was not acquainted with anybody in Paris. He went, therefore, to his appointment with Athos without a second, determined to be satisfied with those his adversary should choose. Besides, his mind was fixed on making the brave musketeer all suitable apologies, but without meanness or weakness, fearing that this duel would have the usual unfortunate result, when a young and vigorous man fights with an adversary who is wounded and enfeebled. If conquered, he doubles the triumph of his antagonist, if a conqueror, he is accused of foul play and cheap courage.

Now, we must have drawn the character of our adventurer very clumsily if our readers have not already perceived that D'Artagnan was by no means an ordinary man. Moreover, he possessed that invincible stock of resolution which the counsels of his father had implanted in his heart, and which were summed up in this sentence: "Endure nothing from any one but the king, the cardinal, and M de Tréville."

He flew, then, rather than walked, towards the monastery of the Carmes Deschaux, a building without a window, surrounded by barren fields, which was generally employed as the place of meeting by men who had no time to lose.

When D'Artagnan arrived in sight of the bare spot of ground which stretched out at the base of the monastery, Athos had been waiting about five minutes, and twelve o'clock was striking. Although still suffering grievously from his wound, which had been freshly dressed by M. de Tréville's surgeon, he was seated on a stone, awaiting his adversary with that placid countenance and that noble expression which never forsook him. At sight of D'Artagnan, he arose and politely came a few steps to meet him. The latter, on his part, saluted his adversary with hat in hand, the feather in it almost touching the ground.

"Sir," said Athos, "I have engaged two of my friends as seconds, but they have not yet come. I am astonished at their delay, as it is not their custom to be behindhand."

"I have no seconds myself, sir," said D'Artagnan. "for, having reached Paris only yesterday, I know no one, as yet, except M. de Tréville, to whom I was recommended by my father, who has the honour to be, to some extent, a friend of his."

Athos reflected for an instant.

"You know no one but M. de Tréville?" he asked.

"No, sir, I know only him."

"Well, well," continued Athos, speaking partly to himself, "well, well, if I kill you, I shall get the reputation of being a child murderer."

"Not entirely," replied D'Artagnan, with a bow that was not deficient in dignity, "not entirely, since you do me the honour to draw sword against me while suffering from a wound which must trouble you very much."

"Very much, upon my word, and you hurt me deucedly, I can tell you, but I will use the left hand—I usually do so under such circumstances. Do not fancy, however, that I

favour you—I use both hands equally readily, it will even be a disadvantage to you, fighting a left-handed man is very troublesome to those who are not accustomed to it I regret I did not inform you sooner of this circumstance ”

“ You are truly, sir,” said D’Artagnan, bowing again, “ very courteous, and I am, I assure you, extremely grateful ”

“ You confuse me,” replied Athos, “ I beg of you, let us talk of something else, unless it is displeasing to you Ah ! Zounds ! how you hurt me ! My shoulder simply burns ! ”

‘ If you would permit me—’ said D’Artagnan timidly

“ What, sir ? ”

“ I have a miraculous balsam for wounds—a balsam given to me by my mother, and I have already made trial of it upon myself ”

“ Well ? ”

“ Well, I am sure that in less than three days this balsam would cure you, and at the end of three days, when you are cured,—well, sir, it would still do me great honour to be your man ”

D’Artagnan spoke these words with a simplicity that did honour to his courtesy, without casting the least doubt upon his courage.

“ Egad, sir ! ” said Athos, “ that’s a proposition which pleases me, not that I accept it, but it has the true ring of a gentleman So spoke the gallant knights of the time of Charlemagne, in whom every knight ought to seek his model Unfortunately, we do not live in the time of that great emperor We live in the times of the cardinal, and three days hence, however well the secret might be guarded, it would be known that we were to fight, and our combat would be forestalled. Will these idlers never come ? ”

“ If you are in a hurry, sir,” said D’Artagnan, with the same simplicity with which a moment before he had proposed to put off the duel for three days, “ if you are in a hurry, and if it be your will to despatch me at once, do not inconvenience yourself, I beg of you.”

"Well, that is again well said," cried Athos, nodding graciously to D'Artagnan, "that did not come from a man without brains, and certainly not from a man without a heart. Sir, I love men of your disposition, and I foresee plainly that, if we don't kill each other, I shall hereafter take real pleasure in your company. We will wait for these gentlemen, if you please, I have plenty of time, and it will be more correct. Ah! here is one of them, I think."

In fact, at that moment they saw the gigantic form of Porthos approaching.

"What!" cried D'Artagnan, "is your first second M Porthos?"

"Yes. Does that displease you?"

"Oh, not at all."

"And here comes the other."

D'Artagnan turned in the direction pointed to by Athos, and perceived Aramis.

"What!" cried he, in a tone of greater astonishment than before, "is your second witness M Aramis?"

"Certainly he is. Are you not aware that we are never seen one without the others, and that we are called in the musketeers and the guards, at court and in the city, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, or the Three Inseparables? And yet, as you come from Dax or Pau—"

"From Tarbes," said D'Artagnan.

"It is probable you are ignorant of this circumstance," said Athos.

"Pon my word!" replied D'Artagnan, "you are well named, gentlemen."

In the meantime Porthos had come up, waved his hand to Athos, and then turning towards D'Artagnan stopped astonished.

"Aha!" said he, "what does this mean?"

"This is the gentleman I am going to fight with," said Athos, pointing to D'Artagnan with his hand, and saluting him.

"Why, it is with him I am also going to fight," said Porthos.

"But not before one o'clock," replied D'Artagnan.

"Well, and I also am going to fight with that gentleman," said Aramis, coming up in his turn.

"But not till two o'clock," said D'Artagnan with the same calmness.

"By Jove! this is a clever fellow," murmured Athos.

"And now you are all assembled, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "permit me to offer you my excuses."

At this word *excuses* a cloud passed over the brow of Athos, a haughty smile curled the lip of Porthos, and a shake of the head was the reply of Aramis.

"You do not understand me, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, lifting up his head, on which a ray of sunlight was playing at that moment, gilding its clear and bold outlines. "I ask to be excused in case I should not be able to discharge my debt to all three, for M. Athos has the right to kill me first, which must diminish considerably your chances of payment, M. Porthos, and renders yours almost worthless, M. Aramis. And now, gentlemen, I repeat, excuse me, but on that account only, and—on guard!"

At these words, in the most gallant fashion conceivable D'Artagnan drew his sword.

The blood had mounted to his head, and at that moment he would have drawn his sword against all the musketeers in the kingdom as willingly as he now did against Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

It was a quarter past twelve. The sun was at its zenith, and the spot chosen for the duel was exposed to its full power.

"It is very hot," said Athos, drawing his sword in his turn, "and yet I cannot take off my doublet, for only just now I felt my wound begin to bleed again, and I should not like to annoy the gentleman with the sight of blood which he has not drawn from me himself."

"That is true, sir," replied D'Artagnan, "and, whether

drawn by myself or another, I assure you I shall always view with regret the blood of so brave a man, I will therefore fight in my doublet, as you do "

"Come, come, enough of such compliments," cried Porthos, "please remember we are waiting our turn "

"Speak for yourself, when you feel like uttering such incivilities," interrupted Aramis "For myself, I think what they said was very well said, and quite worthy of two gentlemen "

"When you please, sir," said Athos, putting himself on guard

"I was awaiting your order," said D'Artagnan, crossing swords

But scarcely had the two rapiers clashed together, when a company of the guards of his Eminence, commanded by M de Jussac, turned the corner of the convent

"The cardinal's guards! the cardinal's guards!" cried Aramis and Porthos at the same time "Sheathe swords, gentlemen! sheathe swords!"

But it was too late The two combatants had been seen in a position which left no doubt of their intentions

"Ha!" cried Jussac, advancing towards them, and making a sign to his men to do the same, "ha, musketeers! so you are fighting here, are you? And what, I pray, has become of the edicts?"

"You are very generous, gentlemen of the guards," said Athos, with acrimony "If we were to see you fighting, I can assure you that we should make no attempt to prevent you Leave us alone, then, and you will enjoy a little amusement without cost to yourselves"

"Gentlemen," said Jussac, "I regret to say that that is impossible Duty before everything Sheathe your swords, if you please, and follow us"

"Sir," said Aramis, parodying Jussac, "it would afford us great pleasure to accept your polite invitation, if it depended upon ourselves, but unfortunately that is impossible: M. de

Tréville has forbidden it So pass on your way , it is the best thing you can do "

This jesting exasperated Jussac

" If you disobey," said he, " we will charge you "

" There are five of them," said Athos, half aloud, " and we are but three We shall be beaten again, and must die on the spot, for, I swear it, I will never appear before the captain as a conquered man "

Athos, Porthos, and Aramis instantly closed in, and Jussac drew up his soldiers

This short interval was sufficient to determine D'Artagnan It was one of those events which decide the life of a man It was a choice between the king and the cardinal The choice once made, must be adhered to To fight was to disobey the law, to risk his head, to make at once an enemy of a minister more powerful than the king himself , all this the young man perceived, and yet, to his praise be it said, he did not hesitate a second Turning towards Athos and his friends,—

" Gentlemen," said he, " allow me to correct your words, if you please You said you were but three, but it appears to me we are four "

" But you are not one of us," said Porthos

" That's true," replied D'Artagnan , " I do not wear the uniform, but I am with you in spirit My heart is that of a musketeer "

" Withdraw, young man," cried Jussac, who, by his gestures and the expression on his face, had doubtless guessed D'Artagnan's design. " You may retire, we allow you to do so Save your skin , begone quickly "

D'Artagnan did not move

" You are a good fellow," said Athos, pressing the young man's hand.

" Come, come, decide one way or the other," replied Jussac.

" Well," said Porthos to Aramis, " we must do something."

" You are very generous," said Athos.

But all three were thinking of D'Artagnan's youth, and dreaded his inexperience

"We should be only three, one of whom is wounded, and a mere boy," resumed Athos, "and yet they will say none the less that we were four men"

"Yes, but to yield?" said Porthos

"That's rather difficult," replied Athos

D'Artagnan understood their hesitation

"Try me, gentlemen," said he, "and I swear to you by my honour that I will not go hence if we are conquered"

"What is your name, my brave fellow?" said Athos

"D'Artagnan, sir"

"Well, then! Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan, forward!" cried Athos

"Come, gentlemen, have you made up your minds?" cried Jussac, for the third time

"It is done, gentlemen," said Athos

"And what do you mean to do?" asked Jussac

"We are about to have the honour of charging you," replied Aramis, lifting his hat with one hand and drawing his sword with the other

"Oh! you resist, do you?" cried Jussac

"Zounds! does that astonish you?"

And the nine combatants rushed at one another with a madness which, however, did not exclude a certain amount of method

Athos fixed upon Cahusac, a favourite of the cardinal's Porthos had Bicaire, and Aramis found himself opposed to two adversaries, while D'Artagnan sprang at Jussac himself

The heart of the young Gascon beat as though it would burst, not from fear,—he had not a shadow of it,—but with emulation He fought like a mad tiger, moving round and round his adversary, and changing his ground and his guard twenty times Jussac was fond of the sword, and had had much practice, nevertheless, it required all his skill to defend himself against an adversary who, active and energetic,

departed every instant from received rules, attacking him on all sides at once, and yet parrying like a man who had the greatest respect for his own skin.

This contest at length exhausted Jussac's patience. Furious at being held in check by one whom he looked upon as a mere boy, he grew angry and began to make mistakes. D'Artagnan, who, though wanting in practice, had a profound knowledge of the science, redoubled his agility. Jussac, anxious to put an end to this, springing forward, aimed a terrible thrust at his adversary, but the latter parried it, and, while Jussac was recovering himself, glided like a serpent beneath his blade, and passed his sword through his body. Jussac fell in a heap.

D'Artagnan then cast an anxious and rapid glance over the field of battle.

Aramis had already killed one of his adversaries, but the other was pressing him warmly. Nevertheless, Aramis was in a good position, and still able to defend himself.

Bicarat and Porthos had just made counter hits. Porthos had received a thrust through his arm, and Bicarat one through his thigh. But neither of the wounds was serious, and they only fought the more strenuously on that account.

Athos, wounded again by Cahusac, was steadily growing paler, but did not give way a foot; he had only changed his sword-hand, and was fighting with his left.

According to the laws of duelling at that period, D'Artagnan was at liberty to assist the one he pleased. While he was trying to find out which of his companions most needed his help, he caught a glance from Athos. That glance was sublimely eloquent. Athos would have died rather than appeal for help, but he could look, and with that look ask assistance. D'Artagnan understood it; with a terrible bound, he sprang to the side of Cahusac, crying

"To me, sir Guard! or I will slay you!"

Cahusac turned. It was time, for Athos, whose great courage alone supported him, sank upon his knee.

"Zounds!" cried he to D'Artagnan, "do not kill him, young man, I beg of you. I have an old score to settle with him, when I am healed and sound again. Disarm him only—make sure of his sword. That's it! that's it! well done! very well done!"

This exclamation was drawn from Athos by seeing the sword of Cahusac fly twenty paces from him. D'Artagnan and Cahusac sprang forward at the same instant, the one to recover, the other to obtain, the sword, but D'Artagnan being the more active reached it first, and placed his foot upon it.

Cahusac immediately ran to the guardsman whom Aramis had killed, seized his rapier, and returned towards D'Artagnan, but on his way he met Athos, who, during the momentary relief which D'Artagnan had procured for him, had recovered his breath, and who, for fear that D'Artagnan should kill his own personal enemy, wished to resume the fight.

D'Artagnan perceived that it would be disobliging Athos not to leave him alone, and in a few minutes Cahusac fell, with a sword-thrust through his throat.

At the same instant Aramis placed his sword-point on the breast of his fallen enemy and compelled him to ask for mercy.

Only Porthos and Bicarat remained. Porthos was boasting merrily, asking Bicarat what o'clock it was, and offering him his compliments upon his brother having just obtained a company in the Navarre regiment, but, joke as he might, he gained no advantage—Bicarat was one of those iron men who never fall dead.

Nevertheless, it was necessary to put an end to the fight. The watch might come up and take all the combatants, wounded or not, royalists or cardinalists. Athos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan surrounded Bicarat, and summoned him to surrender. Though alone, and with a wound in his thigh, Bicarat wished to hold out, but Jussac, who had risen upon his elbow, cried out to him to yield. Bicarat was a Gascon,

like D'Artagnan, he turned a deaf ear, and contented himself with laughing

"There are four against you, leave off, I command you," exclaimed Jussac

"Ah ! if you command me, that's another thing," said Bicarat, "you being my sergeant, it is my duty to obey"

And, springing backward, he broke his sword across his knee, to avoid the necessity of surrendering it, threw the pieces over the convent wall, and crossed his arms, whistling a cardinalist air

Bravely is always respected, even in an enemy The musketeers saluted Bicarat with their swords, and returned them to their sheaths D'Artagnan did the same, then assisted by Bicarat, the only one left standing, he bore Jussac, Cahusac, and that one of Aramis's adversaries who was only wounded, under the porch of the convent The fourth, as we have said, was dead They then rang the bell, and, carrying away four swords out of five, they took their road, intoxicated with joy, towards M de Tréville's mansion.

They walked arm in arm, occupying the whole width of the street, and accosting every musketeer they met, so that it ended in a triumphal march The heart of D'Artagnan throbbed with wild delight, he walked between Athos and Porthos, pressing them tenderly.

"If I am not yet a musketeer," said he, to his new friends, as he passed through the gateway of M de Tréville's mansion, "at least I have entered upon my apprenticeship, haven't I?"

CHAPTER III

HIS MAJESTY KING LOUIS XIII

THIS affair made a great noise M. de Tréville scolded his musketeers in public, and congratulated them in private, but as no time was to be lost in gaining the king, M de Tréville

made all haste to the Louvre. But he was too late, the king was closeted with the cardinal, and M de Tréville was informed that the king was busy and could not receive him. In the evening, M de Tréville went to the king's card-table. The king was winning, and as his Majesty was very avaricious he was in an excellent humour, therefore, perceiving M de Tréville at a distance,—

"Come here, captain," he said, "come here, that I may scold you. Do you know that his Eminence has just made fresh complaints against your musketeers, and his feelings are so stung that his Eminence is indisposed this evening? Why, these musketeers of yours are very fiends—they deserve to be hanged!"

"No, sire," replied Tréville, who saw at once which way things would turn, "no, sire, on the contrary, they are good creatures, as meek as lambs, and have but one desire, I'll be their warranty, and that is, that their swords may never leave their scabbards but in your Majesty's service. But what are they to do? The guards of the cardinal are forever seeking quarrels with them, and if only for the honour of the corps, the poor young men are obliged to defend themselves."

"Listen to M de Tréville," said the king, "listen to him! one would think he was speaking of a monastic community! But don't fancy, my dear captain, that I am going to take you on your bare word, I am called Louis the Just, Monsieur de Tréville, and by and by we shall see."

"Ah! it is because I rely fully upon that justice that I shall wait patiently and quietly your Majesty's good pleasure."

"Wait, then, sir, wait," said the king, "I will not make you wait long."

In fact, fortune changed, and as the king began to lose what he had won, he was not sorry to find an excuse for leaving off play. He rose a minute later, and putting the money which lay before him into his pocket, the major part of which came from his winnings,—

"La Vicuville," said he, "take my place, I must speak to M de Tréville on an affair of importance." Then turning towards M de Tréville, and walking with him towards the embrasure of a window,—

"Well, monsieur," continued he, "you say it was his Eminence's guards who sought a quarrel with your musketeers?"

"Yes, sire, as they always do"

"And how did the thing happen? let us hear, for you know, my dear captain, a judge must listen to both sides"

"Good Lord! in the most simple and natural manner possible Three of my best soldiers, whom your Majesty knows by name, and whose devotion you have more than once appreciated, and who have, I can assure the king, his service much at heart,—three of my best soldiers, I say—Athos, Porthos, and Aramis,—had made up a pleasure party with a young cadet from Gascony, whom I had introduced to them the same morning The party was to take place at St Germain, I believe, and they had appointed to meet at the Carmes Deschaux, when they were disturbed by De Jussac, Cahusac, Bicaïat, and two other guards, who certainly did not go there in a body without the intention of doing something contrary to the edicts"

"Ah, ah! you incline me to think so," said the king, "there is no doubt they went thither with the intention of fighting"

"I do not accuse them, sire, but I leave your Majesty to judge what five armed men could possibly be going to do in such a retired spot as the neighbourhood of the Convent des Carmes"

"You are right, Tréville, you are right!"

"Then, upon seeing my musketeers, they changed their minds, and forgot their private hatred for their regimental feud, for your Majesty cannot be ignorant that the musketeers, who belong to the king, are the natural enemies of the guards, who belong to the cardinal."

"Yes, Tréville ! yes ! " said the king, in a melancholy tone, "and it is very sad, believe me, to see two parties in France, two heads to royalty. But all this will come to an end, Tréville, will come to an end. You say, then, that the guards sought a quarrel with the musketeers ? "

"I say that it is probable that things did happen thus, but I will not swear to it, sire. You know how difficult it is to discover the truth, and unless a man be endowed with that admirable instinct which causes Louis XIII to be termed the Just—"

"You are right, Tréville, but your musketeers were not alone,—they had a youth with them ? "

"Yes, sire, and one wounded man, so that three of the king's musketeers—one of whom was wounded—and a youth not only maintained their ground against five of the most terrible of his Eminence's guards, but actually brought four of them to the earth."

"Why, this is a victory ! " cried the king, glowing with delight, "a complete victory ! "

"Yes, sire."

"Four men, one of them wounded, and a youth, say you ? "

"One scarcely a grown man, but who behaved himself so admirably on this occasion that I shall take the liberty of recommending him to your Majesty."

"What is his name ? "

"D'Artagnan, sire, he is the son of one of my oldest friends—the son of a man who served under your father of glorious memory, in the civil war."

"And you say that this young man behaved himself well ? Tell me how, De Tréville,—you know how I delight in accounts of war and fights."

And Louis XIII twirled his moustache proudly, and placed his hand upon his hip.

"Sire," resumed Tréville, "as I told you, M d'Artagnan is little more than a boy, and as he has not the honour of being a musketeer, he was dressed as a private citizen, the guards of

the cardinal, perceiving his youth, and that he did not belong to the corps, urged him to retire before they made the attack "

" So you may plainly see, Tréville," interrupted the king, " it was they who attacked ? "

" That is true, sire, there can be no more doubt on that head. They called upon him then to retire, but he answered that he was a musketeer at heart, entirely devoted to your Majesty, and that he would therefore remain with the musketeers "

" Brave young man ! " murmured the king

" Well, he did remain with them, and your Majesty has in him so stout a champion that it was he who gave Jussac the terrible sword-thrust which has made the cardinal so angry "

" He wounded Jussac ! " cried the king, " he, a boy ! Tréville, that's impossible ! "

" It is as I have the honour to relate it to your Majesty."

" Jussac, one of the first swordsmen in the kingdom ? "

" Well, sire, for once he found his master "

" I should like to see this young man, Tréville,—I should like to see him, and if anything can be done—well, we shall make it our business to do it "

" When will your Majesty deign to receive him ? "

" To-morrow at mid-day, Tréville "

" Shall I bring him alone ? "

" No, bring me all four together, I wish to thank them all at once. Devoted men are so rare, Tréville, we must reward devotion "

" At twelve o'clock, sire, we shall be at the Louvre "

" But by the back staircase, Tréville, by the back staircase, it is useless to let the cardinal know "

" Yes, sire "

" You understand, Tréville ; an edict is still an edict—it is forbidden to fight, after all "

" But this encounter, sire, is quite outside the ordinary conditions of a duel, it is a brawl, and the proof is that there

were five of the cardinal's guards against my three musketeers and M. d'Artagnan."

"That is true," said the king, "but never mind, Tréville, come in any case by the back staircase."

Tréville smiled. But as it was something to have prevailed upon this child to rebel against his master, he saluted the king respectfully, and, with this understanding, took leave of him.

That evening the three musketeers were informed of the honour which was in store for them. As they had long been acquainted with the king, they were not much excited by it, but D'Artagnan, with his Gascon imagination, saw in it his future fortune, and passed the night in golden dreams. As early as eight o'clock he was at the door of Athos's chamber.

D'Artagnan found the musketeer dressed and ready to go out. As they were not to wait upon the king till twelve, he had made an appointment with Porthos and Aramis to play a game at tennis, in a tennis-court situated near the stables of the Luxembourg. Athos invited D'Artagnan to follow them. Although ignorant of the game, which he had never played, yet, not knowing what to do with himself till twelve o'clock, as it was then scarcely nine, he accepted the invitation.

The two musketeers were already there, and were playing together. Athos, who was very expert in all bodily exercises, went over with D'Artagnan to the opposite court, and challenged them, but at the first stroke he made, although he played with his left hand, he found that his wound was yet too recent to allow of such exertion. D'Artagnan remained, therefore, alone, and, as he declared he was too ignorant of the game to play a match, they only continued giving balls to each other, without counting. But one of these balls, launched by Porthos's herculean hand, passed so close to D'Artagnan's face that he thought if, instead of passing, it had hit him, it would have made his presentation before the king impossible. Now, as in his Gascon imagination, he thought that his whole future depended upon this audience, he saluted Aramis and Porthos politely, declaring that

he would not resume the game until he was prepared to play with them on more equal terms, and he went and took his place in the gallery

Unfortunately for D'Artagnan, among the spectators was one of his Eminence's guards, who, still irritated by the defeat of his companions, which had happened the day before, had determined to seize the first opportunity of avenging it. He believed this opportunity was now come, and addressing his neighbour,—

"It is not astonishing," said he, "that that young man should be afraid of a ball, no doubt he is a musketeer apprentice"

D'Artagnan turned round as if a serpent had stung him, and fixed his eyes intently upon the guard who had just made this insolent speech

"Zounds!" resumed the latter, twirling his moustache, "look at me as long as you like, my little gentleman, what I have said, I have said"

"And since what you have said is too clear to require any explanation," replied D'Artagnan, in a low voice, "I beg you will follow me"

"And when?" asked the guard, in the same jeering tone

"Immediately, if you please"

"You know, I suppose, who I am?"

"I! no, I assure you I do not know you, nor have I any desire to do so"

"You're in the wrong there, for if you knew my name, perhaps you would not be in such a hurry"

"What is your name, then?"

"Bernajoux, at your service"

"Well, then, Monsieur Bernajoux," said D'Artagnan, quietly, "I will wait for you at the door"

"Go on, sir; I will follow you."

"Do not show any hurry, sir, or we may be observed going out together, you must be aware that for what we have in hand company would be inconvenient"

' That's true, ' said the guard, astonished that his name had not produced more effect upon the young man

Everyone had heard the name of Bernajoux, for it was one of those which figured most frequently in the daily brawls which all the edicts of the king and cardinal had not been able to repress

Porthos and Aramis were so engaged with their game, and Athos was watching them so attentively, that they did not even see their young companion go out. He stopped outside the door, as he had told his Eminence's guard he would do, and an instant later the guard followed him. As D'Artagnan had no time to lose, on account of his audience with the king, which was fixed for mid-day, he cast his eyes around, and seeing that the street was empty,—

' Upon my word ! ' " said he to his adversary, ' it is fortunate for you, although your name is Bernajoux, that you have only to deal with an apprentice musketeer, but never mind, be satisfied that I will do my best. On guard ! ' "

" But, ' said he whom D'Artagnan thus provoked ' this place seems to me very ill-chosen. Behind the Abbey St. Germain or in the Pré-aux-Cleres would be better "

' What you say is very sensible, " replied D'Artagnan. but unfortunately I have very little time to spare, having an appointment at twelve precisely. On guard, then, sir, on guard ! " "

Bernajoux was not a man to have such a compliment paid him twice. In an instant his sword glittered in his hand, and he sprang upon his adversary, whom, on account of his youth, he hoped to intimidate

But D'Artagnan had on the preceding day gone through his apprenticeship, and was resolved not to yield an inch. So the two swords were crossed close to the hilts, and as D'Artagnan stood firm, it was his adversary who made the retreating step, but D'Artagnan seized the moment at which, in this movement, the sword of Bernajoux deviated from the line, he freed his weapon, made a lunge, and

touched his adversary on the shoulder. D'Artagnan immediately made a step backwards and raised his sword, but Bernajoux cried out that it was nothing, and rushing blindly upon him, spitted himself upon D'Artagnan's sword. As, however, he did not fall, and as he did not declare himself conquered, but only rushed away towards the mansion of M de Trémouille, in whose service he had a relative, D'Artagnan was ignorant of the seriousness of the last wound his adversary had received. He followed Bernajoux closely, and would no doubt soon have completed his work with a third blow, when the noise which arose from the street being heard in the tennis-court, two friends of the guard, who had seen him go out after exchanging words with D'Artagnan, rushed, sword in hand, from the court, and fell upon the conqueror. But Athos, Porthos, and Aramis quickly appeared in their turn, and the moment the two guards attacked their young companion, drove them back. Bernajoux now fell, and as the guards were only two against four, they began to cry, 'To the rescue!' At these cries, all who were in the mansion of M de Trémouille rushed out falling upon the four companions, who cried out, "To the rescue musketeers!"

This cry was usually heeded, for the musketeers were known to be enemies of the cardinal, and were popular on that account. Consequently the guards of other companies, except those which belonged to his Eminence, generally took part with the king's musketeers in these quarrels. Of the three guardsmen of M des Essarts's company who were passing, two came to the assistance of the four companions, while the other ran to the mansion of M de Tréville, crying "To the rescue! Musketeers! to the rescue!" This mansion was as usual full of soldiers of that corps, who hastened to the assistance of their comrades, the *mêlée* became general, but the advantage was on the side of the musketeers, the cardinal's guards and M. de la Trémouille's people retreated into the mansion, the doors of which they closed just in time to prevent their enemies from entering.

with them. The wounded man had already been taken in in a very serious condition.

Excitement was at its height among the musketeers and their allies, and they were already considering whether they should set fire to the mansion to punish the insolence of M de la Tiémouille's domestics in daring to make a *sortie* upon the king's musketeers. The proposition had been made, and received with enthusiasm, when fortunately eleven o'clock struck, D'Artagnan and his companions remembered their audience, and not desiring such an exploit to be performed in their absence, they succeeded in quieting their companions. The latter contented themselves with hurling some paving-stones against the gates, but the gates were too strong, so they eventually grew tired of the sport. In the meantime the leaders of the enterprise had quitted the group and were making their way towards the mansion of M de Tréville, who was waiting for them, having been already informed of this fresh disturbance.

"Quick to the Louvre," said he, "to the Louvre without losing an instant, and let us endeavour to see the king before he is prejudiced by the cardinal, we will describe the thing to him as a consequence of yesterday's quarrel, and the two will pass off together."

M de Tréville, accompanied by his four young men, directed his course towards the Louvre, but to the great astonishment of the captain of the musketeers, he was informed that the king had gone stag-hunting in the forest of St. Germain. M de Tréville required this intelligence to be repeated to him twice, and each time his companions saw his brow become darker.

"Had his Majesty," asked he, "any intention of holding this hunting party yesterday?"

"No, your Excellency," replied the valet, "the master of the hounds came this morning to inform him that last night he had started a stag. He at first answered that he would not go, but could not resist his love of sport, and set out after dinner."

"Has the king seen the cardinal?" asked M de Tréville

"Most probably he has," replied the valet, "for I saw the horses harnessed to his Eminence's carriage this morning, and when I asked where he was going, I was told 'to St Germain' "

"He has gotten ahead of us," said M de Tréville "Gentlemen, I will see the king this evening, but I do not advise you to risk doing so "

M de Tréville recommended them each to retire to his apartment, and wait for news from him

On entering his mansion, M de Tréville thought it would be best for him to make the first complaint, so he sent one of his servants to M de la Trémouille with a letter, in which he begged of him to eject the cardinal's guards from his house, and to reprimand his people for their audacity in making a *sortie* against the king's musketeers But M de la Trémouille, already prejudiced by his esquire, who, as we know was a relative of Bernajoux, replied that it was neither for M de Tréville nor the musketeers to complain, but rather for him, whose people the musketeers had assaulted and whose mansion they had endeavoured to burn Now, as such an argument might last a long time, M de Tréville thought of an expedient to terminate it quietly, and this was to go himself to M de la Trémouille

So he repaired immediately to that nobleman's mansion, and caused himself to be announced

The two nobles saluted each other politely, for although there was no friendship between them, there was mutual esteem

"Sir!" said M de Tréville, "we fancy that we have each cause to complain of the other, and I have come to endeavour to clear up this misunderstanding "

"I have no objection," replied M de la Trémouille coldly, "but I warn you that I have inquired thoroughly into it, and all the fault lies with your musketeers "

"You are too just and reasonable a man, sir," said De Tréville, "not to accept the proposition I am about to make to you "

"Make it, sir I am listening"

"How is M Bernajoux, your esquire's relative?"

"Why, sir, very ill indeed! In addition to the sword-thrust in his arm, which is not dangerous, he has received another right through his lungs, of which the doctor speaks very unfavourably"

"But is the wounded man conscious?"

"Perfectly"

"Can he speak?"

"Yes he can speak, but with difficulty"

"Well, sir, let us go to him, let us adjure him solemnly to speak the truth I will accept him as judge in his own cause, sir, and will believe what he says"

M de la Trémouille reflected for an instant, then, as it was difficult to make a more reasonable proposition, agreed to it

Both entered the chamber in which the wounded man lay. The latter, on seeing these two noble lords enter his room, endeavoured to raise himself up in his bed, but he was too weak, and, exhausted by the effort, he fell back again almost insensible

M de la Trémouille approached him, and made him inhale some salts, which restored him to consciousness. Then M de Tréville, unwilling to be accused of having influenced the wounded man, requested M de la Trémouille to question him himself

What M de Tréville had foreseen happened. Placed between life and death, as Bernajoux was, he made no attempt to conceal the truth, and he described to the two nobles the affair exactly as it had taken place

This was all that M de Tréville wanted, he wished Bernajoux a speedy recovery, took leave of M de la Trémouille returned to his house, and immediately sent word to the four friends that he awaited their company at dinner.

At the conclusion of dinner, toward six o'clock, M. de Tréville announced that it was time to go to the Louvre, but as the hour of audience granted by his Majesty was past, instead

of asking for admittance by the back stairs, he waited with the four young men in the ante-chamber. The king had not yet returned from hunting. Our young men had been waiting barely half an hour among the crowd of courtiers, when all the doors were thrown open, and his Majesty was announced.

At this announcement D'Artagnan felt himself trembling all over. The instant which was now approaching would, in all probability, decide his future life. His eyes, therefore, were fixed in an agonized gaze upon the door through which the king would pass.

Louis XIII appeared, walking ahead of his *suite*, he was in hunting costume covered with dust, wearing large boots, and had a whip in his hand. At the first glance, D'Artagnan perceived that the king was in a bad humour.

This disposition, so plainly visible in his Majesty, did not prevent the courtiers from ranging themselves where they could be seen by him as he passed. In royal ante chambers, it is better to be looked upon with an angry eye than not to be looked upon at all. The three musketeers, therefore, did not hesitate to step forward, D'Artagnan, on the contrary, remained concealed behind them, but although the king knew Athos, Porthos, and Aramis personally, he passed in front of them without speaking or looking—as if indeed he had never set eyes upon them before. As for M de Tréville, when the king's glance fell for an instant upon him, he bore it with such equanimity that it was the king who looked away, after which his Majesty entered his apartment, grumbling.

"Matters go but badly," said Athos, smiling, "and we shall not be made knights of the order this time."

"Wait here ten minutes," said M de Tréville, "and if, at the expiration of that time, you do not see me come out, return to my house, for it will be useless for you to wait for me longer."

The four young men waited ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes, and, seeing that M de Tréville did not return, went away very uneasy in regard to the future.

M de Tréville entered the king's closet boldly, and found his Majesty in a very ill humour, seated in an arm-chair, beating his boot with the handle of his whip. This, however, did not prevent his asking, in the most unperturbed manner, after his Majesty's health.

"Bad, sir,—bad! I am bored"

"What! Your Majesty is bored! Have you not had good hunting to-day?"

"Good hunting, indeed, sir! Upon my soul, everything degenerates, and I don't know whether it is the game that leaves no scent, or the hounds that have no noses. I shall be obliged to give up hunting, as I have given up hawking. Ah! I am an unfortunate king, Monsieur de Tréville! I had but one gerfalcon, and he died the day before yesterday."

"Indeed, sire, I comprehend your vexation perfectly, it is a misfortune, but I think you have still a good number of falcons, sparrow-hawks, and tiercels."

"And not a man to instruct them. Falconers are dying out, I know no one but myself who is acquainted with the noble art of vengy. If I had only the time to train pupils! but there is the cardinal always at hand, who does not leave me a moment's repose, who talks to me perpetually about Spain, about Austria, about England! Ah! speaking of the cardinal, Monsieur de Tréville, I am vexed with you."

This was what M de Tréville was waiting for. He knew the king of old, and he knew that all these complaints were but a preface,—a spur to encourage himself,—and that he had now come to his point at last.

"And in what have I been so unfortunate as to displease your Majesty?" asked M de Tréville, feigning the most profound astonishment.

"Is it thus you perform your office, sir?" continued the king, without directly replying to De Tréville's question, "is it for this I appointed you captain of my musketeers, that they should assassinate a man, disturb a whole quarter, and endeavour to set fire to Paris, without your saying a word?"

But yet," continued the king, "no doubt I am too hasty in accusing you, no doubt the noters are in prison, and you come to tell me justice is done"

"Sire," replied M de Tréville, calmly, "on the contrary I come to demand it of you"

"And against whom, pray?" cried the king

"Against calumniators," said M de Tréville

"Ah! this is something new," replied the king "Are you going to tell me that your three musketeers, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and your cadet from Béarn, did not fall, like furies, upon poor Bernajoux, and did not maltreat him in such a fashion that probably by this time he is at the point of death? Are you going to tell me that they did not lay siege to the mansion of the Duc de la Trémouille, and that they did not endeavour to burn it?—Tell me, now, can you deny all this?"

"And who has told you this fine story, sire?" asked De Tréville, quietly

"Who has told me this fine story sir? Who should it be but he who watches while I sleep, who labours while I amuse myself, who directs everything at home and abroad—in Europe as well as in France?"

"Your Majesty must be speaking of God without doubt," said M de Tréville, "for I know no one but God who can be so far above your Majesty"

"No, sir, I speak of the prop of the state—of my only servant—of my only friend—of the cardinal"

"His Eminence is not his Holiness, sire"

"What do you mean by that, sir?"

"That it is the Pope alone who is infallible, and that this infallibility does not extend to the cardinals"

"You mean that he deceives me—you mean that he betrays me? You accuse him, then? Come, speak, confess frankly that you accuse him!"

"No, sire, but I say that he himself is deceived, I say that he is ill informed, I say that he has hastily accused your

Majesty's musketeers, towards whom he is unjust, and that he has not obtained his information from good sources "

The accusation comes from M de la Trémouille—from the duke himself. What do you answer to that ? "

I might answer, sire, that he is too deeply interested in the question to be a very impartial witness, but far from that, sire, I know the duke to be a loyal gentleman, and I refer the matter to him,—but upon one condition, sire "

What is that ? "

' It is that your Majesty will make him come here, will question him yourself, face to face, without witnesses, and that I shall see your Majesty as soon as you shall have seen the duke "

What ! and you will be bound," cried the king, " by what M de la Trémouille will say ? "

Yes, sire "

You will abide by his judgment ? '

Certainly—I will "

And you will submit to the reparation he may require ? "

Certainly "

La Chesnaye," cried the king, " La Chesnaye ! "

Louis XIII's confidential valet, who never left the door, entered in answer to the summons

' La Chesnaye," said the king, ' let some one go instantly and find M de la Trémouille, I wish to speak with him this evening '

Your Majesty gives me your word that you will not see any one after M de la Trémouille until you see me ? "

Nobody—on the word of a gentleman "

To-morrow then, sire ? "

To-morrow, sir "

' At what o'clock may it please your Majesty ? "

At whatsoever time you like "

' But I should be afraid of awakening your Majesty, if I came too early "

' Awaken me ! Do you think I ever sleep ? I no longer

sleep, sir I sometimes dream, that's all Come, then, as early as you like—at seven o'clock, but beware, if your musketeers are guilty”

‘ If my musketeers are guilty, sire, the guilty shall be placed in your Majesty’s hands, and you can dispose of them at your good pleasure Does your Majesty require anything further ? Speak, I am ready to obey ”

“ No, sir, no To-morrow, then, sir,—to-morrow ”

“ Till then, God preserve your Majesty ”

However poorly the king might sleep, M de Tréville slept still worse, he had ordered his three musketeers and their companion to be with him at half-past six in the morning He took them with him, without assuring them or promising them anything, and without concealing from them that their favour, and even his own, depended upon a single throw of the dice

When they had reached the foot of the back stairs, he desired them to wait If the king was still irritated against them, they should depart without being seen, if the king consented to see them, they would only have to be called

On arriving at the king’s private ante chamber, M de Tréville found La Chesnaye, who informed him that they had not been able to find M de la Trémouille on the preceding evening at his house, that he had come in too late to present himself at the Louvre, that he had only just appeared, and that he was then with the king

This news was very agreeable to M de Tréville, as he thus became certain that no suggestion hostile to himself was likely to reach the king’s ear after M de la Trémouille had made his deposition

In fact, ten minutes had scarcely passed before the door of the king’s closet opened, and M. de Tréville saw M de la Trémouille come out, the duke came straight up to him and said

“ M de Tréville, his Majesty has just sent for me to inquire about the events which took place yesterday at my house

I have told him the truth, that is to say, that the fault lay with my people, and that I was ready to offer you my excuses for them. Since I have the good fortune to meet you, I beg you to receive them, and to consider me always as one of your friends.

'Duke' said M. de Tréville, "I was so confident of your loyalty that I did not wish any but you to defend me before his Majesty. I find that I have not been mistaken, and I am gratified to think that there is still one man in France of whom it is possible to say, without being mistaken, what I have said of you."

"That's well said," said the king, who had heard all these compliments through the open door, "only tell him, Tréville, since he wishes to be considered as your friend, that I also wish to be one of his, but he neglects me, that it is nearly three years since I have seen him, and that I never do see him unless I send for him. Tell him all this for me, for these are things which a king cannot say himself."

"Thanks, sire, thanks," said M. de la Trémouille, "but your Majesty may be assured that it is not those—I do not speak of M. de Tréville—that it is not those whom your Majesty sees at all hours of the day who are the most devoted to you."

"Ah! you heard what I said? so much the better, duke, so much the better," said the king, advancing to the door. "Ah! that's you, Tréville. Where are your musketeers? I told you the day before yesterday to bring them with you—why have you not done so?"

'They are below, sire, and with your permission La Chesnaye will tell them to come up.'

"Yes, yes, let them come up immediately, it is nearly eight o'clock, and at nine I expect a visit. Go, duke, and come again, I beg of you. Come in, Tréville."

The duke bowed and retired. At the moment he opened the door the three musketeers and D'Artagnan, led by La Chesnaye, appeared at the top of the staircase.

"Come in, my braves," said the king, "come in, I have a scolding for you"

The musketeers advanced, bowing, D'Artagnan following closely behind them

"What is this I hear?" continued the king, "seven of his Eminence's guards disabled by you four in two days! That's too many, gentlemen, too many! If you go on so, his Eminence will be obliged to renew his company in three weeks, and I to enforce the edicts to their fullest extent. One, now and then, I have no objection to, but seven in two days, I repeat, it is too many, it is far too many!"

"Therefore, sire, your Majesty sees that they are come quite contrite and repentant to offer you their excuses"

"Quite contrite and repentant! Hem!" said the king, "I place no confidence in their hypocritical faces, in particular, there is one yonder with a Gascon face. Come here, sir"

D'Artagnan, who understood that it was to him this compliment was addressed, approached, assuming a most despondent air

"Why, you told me he was a young man? This is a boy, Tréville, a mere boy! Do you mean to say that it was he who gave Jussac that severe thrust?"

"And those two equally fine thrusts to Bernajoux?"

"Astonishing!"

"Without reckoning," said Athos, "that if he had not rescued me from the hands of Cahusac, I should not now have the honour of making my very humble reverence to your Majesty"

"Why this Béarnais is a very fiend! But Gascons are always poor, are they not?"

"Sire, I must say that they have not yet discovered any gold mines in their mountains, though that miracle is no more than they deserve for the manner in which they supported the claims of the king, your father"

"Which means, that the Gascons made a king of me myself, seeing that I am my father's son, does it not, Tréville?"

Well, in good faith, I don't say nay to it. La Chesnaye, go and see if, by rummaging all my pockets, you can find forty pistoles, and if you find them bring them to me. And now, let us hear, young man, how all this came about."

D'Artagnan thereupon related the adventure of the preceding day in all its details.

"This is all very well," murmured the king, "yes, this is just the account the duke de la Trémouille gave me of the affair. Poor cardinal! seven men in two days, and those of his very best! but that's quite enough, gentlemen, please to understand, that's enough. You have taken your revenge, and even exceeded it, you ought to be satisfied."

"If your Majesty is," said Tréville, "we are."

"Oh, yes, I am," added the king, taking a handful of gold from La Chesnaye, and putting it into the hand of D'Artagnan. Here," said he, "is a proof of my satisfaction."

At this period, the ideas of pride which are in fashion in our days did not prevail. A gentleman received money directly from the king's hand and was not in the least humiliated. D'Artagnan put his forty pistoles into his pocket without any scruple, on the contrary he thanked his Majesty most heartily.

"There," said the king, looking at a clock, "there, now, as it is half past eight, you may retire, for, as I told you, I expect some one at nine. Thanks for your devotion, gentlemen. I may continue to rely upon it, may I not?"

"Oh, sir?" cried the four companions with one voice, "we would allow ourselves to be cut to pieces in your Majesty's service."

Well, well, but keep whole, that will be better, and you will be more useful to me. Tréville," added the king, in a low voice, as the others were retiring, "as you have no room in your musketeers, and as we have decided that an apprenticeship is necessary before entering that corps, put this young man in the company of guards commanded by your brother-in-law, M. des Essarts. Ah! Zounds! I enjoy

already the face the cardinal will make, he will be furious! but I don't care, I am doing what is right."

And the king waved his hand to Tréville, who left him and rejoined the musketeers, whom he found sharing the forty pistoles with D'Artagnan.

And the cardinal, as his Majesty had said, was furious so furious that for a whole week he absented himself from the king's card-table.

[D'Artagnan is appointed by the king to M des Essarts's guards and not to the musketeers. His landlord M Bonacieux informs him that Madame Bonacieux has been kidnapped by the unknown man of Meung, at the instigation of the cardinal, as an accomplice in a love intrigue between the Queen and the English Duke of Buckingham. D'Artagnan unexpectedly sees the man of Meung in the street and gives chase.]

CHAPTER IV

D'ARTAGNAN'S CHARACTER UNFOLDS

As Athos and Porthos had foreseen, at the expiration of half an hour D'Artagnan returned. He had once again missed the man of Meung, who had disappeared as if by enchantment. D'Artagnan had run, sword in hand, through all the neighbouring streets, but had found nobody resembling the person he was looking for. Then at last he came back to the point where he should perhaps have started, which was the door against which the unknown was leaning. At this he knocked ten or twelve times running, but quite uselessly, for no one answered, and some of the neighbours, who had put their heads out of their windows, or were brought to their doors by the noise, assured him that the house, all the doors and windows of which were tightly closed, had been entirely uninhabited for six months.

While D'Artagnan was running through the streets and knocking at doors, Aramis had joined his companions, so that on returning home D'Artagnan found his three friends together.

' Well ? ' cried the three musketeers, on seeing D'Artagnan enter with his brow covered with perspiration and his face clouded with anger.

' Well ! ' cried he, throwing his sword upon the bed, ' this man must be the fiend in person—he has vanished like a ghost '.

" Do you believe in ghosts ? " asked Athos of Porthos.

" I never believe in anything I have not seen, and as I never have seen a ghost, I don't believe in them ".

" At all events, man or fiend, body or shadow, illusion or reality, this man was born to be my ruin, for his flight has made us miss a glorious adventure, gentlemen, an adventure by which there were a hundred pistoles, and perhaps more, to be gained ".

' How is that ? ' cried Porthos and Aramis in a breath.

Athos, preserving his usual silence, contented himself with questioning D'Artagnan by a look.

' Planchet,' said D'Artagnan, to his domestic, who just then pushed his head through the half-open door in order to catch some fragments of the conversation, " go down to my landlord, M. Bonacieux, and tell him to send me half a dozen bottles of the Beaugency wine that I like ".

' Aha ! ' so you have full credit with your landlord, have you ? " asked Porthos.

Yes,' replied D'Artagnan, " from this very day, and if his wine is bad, we will send to him for better ".

' I always said that D'Artagnan had the longest head of the four,' said Athos, who, after having uttered this opinion, to which D'Artagnan replied with a bow, immediately resumed his habitual silence.

" But come, tell us what is at the bottom of all this ? " asked Porthos.

"Yes," said Aramis, 'confide it to us, my dear friend, unless the honour of some lady be concerned in this confidence, in that case you had better keep it to yourself"

"Be reassured," replied D'Artagnan, "no one's honour is likely to suffer from what I have to tell you"

He then told his friends, word for word, all that had passed between him and his landlord, and how the man who had carried off the wife of his worthy landlord, the queen's seamstress, was the same with whom he had had a difference at the hostelry of the Jolly Miller

"Your adventure is not a bad one," said Athos, after having tasted the wine like a connoisseur, and indicated by a nod of his head that he thought it good, "and fifty or sixty pistoles may be got out of this good man Now, the only thing to consider is whether these fifty or sixty pistoles are worth the risk of four heads"

"But please to observe," cried D'Artagnan, "that there is a woman in the affair, a woman carried off, a woman who is threatened, tortured perhaps, and all because she is faithful to her mistress"

"Beware, D'Artagnan, beware," said Aramis, "you grow a little too warm, in my opinion, about the fate of Madame Bonacieux"

"It is not Madame Bonacieux about whom I am anxious," cried D'Artagnan, 'but the queen, whom the king abandons, whom the cardinal persecutes, and who sees the heads of all her friends fall one after the other"

"Why does she love what we hate most in the world, the Spaniards and the English?"

"Spain is her country," replied D'Artagnan, "and it is very natural that she should love the Spanish, who are children of the same soil as herself As to the second reproach, I have heard it said that she does not love the English, but an Englishman"

"Well, by my faith!" said Athos, 'we must confess that this Englishman is worthy of being loved I never saw a man with a nobler bearing"

‘ Besides, the Duke of Buckingham dresses as nobody else can,” said Porthos. ‘ I was at the Louvre the day he scattered his pearls, and, zounds! I picked up two that I sold for ten pistoles each ’

‘ And did your landlord,” asked Athos, “ tell you, D’Artagnan, that the queen thought that Buckingham had been brought over to France by a forged letter ? ”

‘ She is afraid so ’

‘ Wait a minute,” said Aramis

“ What for ? ” demanded Porthos

‘ Go on I am trying to recall some circumstances ’

‘ And now I am convinced,” said D’Artagnan, ‘ that this abduction of the queen’s seamstress is connected with the events of which we are speaking, and perhaps with the presence of the Duke of Buckingham in Paris ’

“ The Gascon is full of ideas,” said Porthos, with admiration

“ I like to hear him talk,” said Athos, “ his dialect amuses me ”

“ Gentlemen,” cried Aramis, “ listen to this ”

‘ Listen to Aramis,’ said his three friends

“ Yesterday I was at the house of a learned doctor of theology whom I sometimes consult about my studies ”

Athos smiled

‘ He resides in a quiet quarter,” continued Aramis, “ his taste, and his profession require it Now, at the moment that I left his house—”

Here Aramis stopped

“ Well,” cried his auditors, “ at the moment you left his house ? ’

‘ This doctor has a niece,” continued Aramis, with considerable hesitation

“ A niece! has he ? ” interrupted Porthos.

“ This niece,” resumed Aramis, “ comes sometimes to see her uncle, and happened to be there yesterday at the same time that I was, and I could do no less than offer to conduct her to her carriage ”

"Oh! oh! Then this niece of the doctor's keeps a carriage, does she?" interrupted Porthos

"Porthos," replied Aramis, "I have already had occasion to observe to you, more than once, that you are very indiscreet"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," cried D'Artagnan, who began to catch a glimpse of the outcome of the adventure, "the matter is serious, try if possible, not to joke. Go on, Aramis, go on"

"All at once a tall, dark man, with the manner of a gentleman—the same style as yours, eh? D'Artagnan"

"The same, perhaps," said he

"Possibly," continued Aramis—"came towards me accompanied by five or six men, who followed at about ten paces behind him, and, in the politest tone, 'Duke,' said he to me, 'and you, madame,' continued he, addressing the lady, who had hold of my arm—"

"The doctor's niece?"

"Hold your tongue, Porthos," said Athos, "you are insupportable"

"Be so kind as to get into this carriage, without offering the slightest resistance, or making the least noise"

"He took you for Buckingham!" cried D'Artagnan.

"I believe so," replied Aramis

"But the lady?" asked Porthos

"He took her for the queen!" said D'Artagnan

"Just so," replied Aramis

"The Gascon is the fiend himself!" cried Athos, "nothing escapes him"

"Of course," said Porthos, "Aramis is of the same height and something of the form of the handsome duke, but still it appears to me that the uniform of a musketeer—"

"I wore a very large cloak," said Aramis.

"Well," said Porthos, "I can understand that the spy may have been deceived by your figure, but your face—"

"I had a very large hat on," said Aramis.

"Oh 'ho'!" cried Porthos, "what a lot of precautions in order to study theology!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "do not let us lose our time in jesting, let us separate, and let us seek the landlord's wife, there lies the key to the intrigue"

'A woman in such a humble position! do you believe it, D'Artagnan?' said Porthos, contemptuously

"She is goddaughter to La Porte, the confidential valet of the queen. Have I not told you so, gentlemen? Besides, it is probable that her Majesty intentionally sought, on this occasion, such humble support. Lofty heads can be seen from a distance, and the cardinal is far-sighted"

"Well," said Porthos, "in the first place make a bargain with the landlord, and a good bargain, too"

"That's useless," said D'Artagnan, "for I believe if he does not pay us, we shall be well enough paid by another party"

At this moment a sudden noise of footsteps was heard upon the stairs, the door was thrown violently open, and the unfortunate landlord rushed into the chamber in which the council was being held

"Save me! gentlemen! save me!" cried he. "There are four men come to arrest me, save me! for the love of heaven, save me!"

Porthos and Aramis rose

'One moment,' cried D'Artagnan, making them a sign to replace their half-drawn swords, "one moment, on this occasion we don't need courage, we need prudence"

'And yet,' cried Porthos, "we will not leave—"

'You will let D'Artagnan act as he thinks proper,' said Athos, "he has, I repeat, the longest head of us all, and for my part I declare I obey him. Do as you think best, D'Artagnan"

At this moment the four guards appeared at the door of the antechamber, but seeing four musketeers standing with swords at their sides, they hesitated to advance farther

"Come in, gentlemen, come in, this is my apartment, and we are all faithful servants of the king and the cardinal"

'Then, gentlemen, you will not oppose our executing the orders we have received?' asked he who appeared to be the leader of the party

"On the contrary, gentlemen, we would assist you if it were necessary"

'What is he saying?' grumbled Porthos

"That you are a simpleton," said Athos, "hold your tongue"

"But you promised me," said the poor landlord, in a very low voice

'We can save you only by being free ourselves,' replied D'Artagnan, in a low and hurried tone, "and if we show ourselves ready to defend you, they will arrest us with you"

"It seems to me, all the same—"

"Come in, gentlemen! come in!" called out D'Artagnan, "I have no motive for defending the gentleman. I saw him to-day for the first time, and he can tell you the circumstances he came to demand the rent of my lodging. Is not that true, M. Bonacieux? Answer"

"That's the very truth," cried the landlord, "but the gentleman does not tell you—"

"Silence about me! silence about my friends! above all, silence about the queen, or you will ruin everybody without saving yourself," whispered D'Artagnan. "Now, gentlemen, come, take away this man!"

And D'Artagnan pushed the half-stupefied landlord among the guards, saying to him

"You are a miserly old rascal!—you come to demand money of me! of a musketeer!—to prison with him, gentlemen, take him to prison, I say, and keep him locked up as long as possible—that will give me time to pay him"

The officers were full of thanks, and took away their prey.

Just as they were going down, D'Artagnan laid his hand on their leader's shoulder.

" Shall I not have the pleasure of drinking your health, and you mine ? " said D'Artagnan, filling two glasses with the Beaugency wine which he had obtained through the generosity of M. Bonacieux

' It will be a great honour," said the chief of the officers, ' and I accept with gratitude "

' Then to yours, sir,—what is your name ? "

" Boisrenard "

" Monsieur Boisrenard ! "

" To yours, my good sir,—it is now your turn to acquaint me with your name if you please ? "

" D'Artagnan "

" To yours, Monsieur D'Artagnan "

" And above all others," cried D'Artagnan, as if carried away by his enthusiasm, ' to that of the king and the cardinal "

The chief of the officers would perhaps have doubted the sincerity of D'Artagnan if the wine had been bad, but the wine was good, and he was convinced

' Why, what villainy have you been up to now," said Porthos, when the chief of the police had rejoined his companions and the four friends were left alone ' Shame ! shame ! for four musketeers to allow an unfortunate wretch who cried out for help to be arrested in their midst And a gentleman to hob-nob with a bailiff ! "

' Porthos," said Aramis, ' Athos has already told you you are a simpleton, and I am quite of his opinion D'Artagnan, you are a great man, and when you occupy M. de Tréville's place, I will come and ask your influence to secure me an abbey "

' Well ! I am quite at a loss ! " said Porthos, ' do you approve of what D'Artagnan has just done ? "

' Zounds ! of course I do ! " said Athos, " I not only approve of what he has done, but I congratulate him upon it "

' And now, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, without stopping to explain his conduct to Porthos, " all for one, one for all, that is our motto, is it not ? "

"And yet—" said Porthos

'Hold out your hand and swear!' cried Athos and Aramis at the same time

Overcome by example, grumbling to himself, Porthos stretched out his hand, and the four friends repeated with one voice the formula dictated by D'Artagnan

"All for one, one for all"

"That's well! Now let every one retire to his own house," said D'Artagnan, as if he had done nothing but command all his life, and remember! from this moment we are at war with the cardinal"

[D'Artagnan rescues Madame Bonacieux, and again meets her with the Duke of Buckingham, whom she is conducting to a secret interview with the queen. The cardinal is informed of this interview, and that the queen has given the duke twelve diamond studs which have been a recent present to her from the king. He sends Milady, one of his spies, to London to steal two of the studs, and persuades the king to give a great ball and to request the queen to appear at the dance wearing the diamond studs. Madame Bonacieux gives D'Artagnan a ring from the queen, and charges him with the mission of warning the duke and of bringing back the studs in time for the ball.]

CHAPTER V

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

D'ARTAGNAN went straight to M de Tréville's mansion. He believed that in a few minutes the cardinal would be warned of what had passed between himself and Madame Bonacieux by the cursed unknown, who appeared to be his agent, and he rightly judged he had not a moment to lose.

The young man's heart overflowed with joy. An opportunity presented itself to him of gaining both money and glory;

and this chance was more than he would have dared to ask of Providence

M de Tréville was in his drawing-room with his usual following of gentlemen D'Artagnan, who was now well known in the house, went straight to his office, and sent word to him that he wished to see him upon an affair of importance

D'Artagnan had been there scarcely five minutes when M de Tréville entered At the first glance, and by the joy which was painted on his countenance, the worthy captain plainly perceived that something fresh was on foot

All the way along D'Artagnan had been deliberating whether he should place confidence in M de Tréville, or whether he should only ask him to give him a free hand in a secret affair But M de Tréville had always been so perfectly friendly, had always been so devoted to the king and queen, and hated the cardinal so cordially, that the young man resolved to tell him everything

' You have something to say to me, my young friend ? ' said M de Tréville

' Yes, sir,' said D'Artagnan, "and you will pardon me, I hope, for having disturbed you when you know the importance of my business "

"Speak then, I am all attention "

"It concerns nothing less," said D'Artagnan, lowering his voice, ' than the honour, perhaps the life, of the queen "

' What are you saying ? ' asked M de Tréville, glancing round to see if they were alone, and then fixing a scrutinising look upon D'Artagnan

I say, sir, that chance has rendered me master of a secret—"

' Which you will keep, I hope, young man, with your life."

"But which I must impart to you, sir, for you alone can assist me in the mission I have just received from her Majesty."

' Is this secret your own ? ' "

"No, sir, it is the queen's "

"Are you authorized by her Majesty to communicate it to me ? "

"No, sir , on the contrary, I am desired to preserve the profoundest secrecy "

"Why, then, are you about to betray it to me ? "

"Because, as I said, without you I can do nothing, and I was afraid that you would refuse me the favour I have come to ask, if you did not know for what purpose I asked it "

"Keep your secret, young man, and tell me what you desire "

"I wish you to obtain for me, from M des Essarts, ~~leave of~~ absence for a fortnight."

"When ? "

"This very night "

"You are leaving Paris ' "

"I am going on a mission "

"Am I permitted to ask where ? "

"To London "

"Has any one an interest in preventing your arrival there ? "

"The cardinal, I believe, would give anything in the world to hinder me from succeeding "

"And you are going alone ? "

"I am going alone "

"In that case you will not get beyond Bondy I tell you so, by the word of De Tréville "

"How so, sir ? "

"You will be assassinated "

"And I shall die in the performance of my duty."

"But your mission will not be accomplished "

"That is true ' " replied D'Artagnan

"Believe me," continued Tréville, "in enterprises of this kind, four must set out, for one to arrive."

"Ah! you are right, sir," said D'Artagnan; "but you know Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and you know whether I can make use of them "

"Without confiding in them the secret which I did not desire to know?"

"We are sworn, once and for ever, to implicit confidence and devotion in face of all temptation. Besides, you can tell them that you have full confidence in me, and they will not be more incredulous than you."

"I can grant to each of them leave of absence for a fortnight, that is all, to Athos, whose wound still gives him trouble, to go to the waters of Forges, to Porthos and Aramis to accompany their friend, whom they are unwilling to leave in such painful circumstances. Granting them leave of absence will be proof enough that I authorize their journey."

'Thanks, sir! You are a hundred times too good!'

'Go and find them instantly, and let all be done to-night. Ah! but first write your request to M. des Essarts. Perhaps you had a spy at your heels, and your visit—in that case already known to the cardinal—will be thus made regular.'

D'Artagnan drew up his request, and M. de Tréville, on receiving it, assured him that before two o'clock in the morning the four leaves of absence should be at the respective lodgings of the four travellers.

'Have the goodness to send mine to Athos's residence,'" said D'Artagnan. "I fear that if I were to go home I might meet with some misadventure."

'I will. Farewell! and a prosperous journey! By the way!'

 said M. de Tréville, calling him back.

D'Artagnan returned.

'Have you any money?'

D'Artagnan jingled the bag he had in his pocket.

'Enough?'

 asked M. de Tréville.

'Three hundred pistoles.'

'Excellent! That will carry you to the end of the world. Go, then!'

D'Artagnan bowed to M. de Tréville, who held out his hand to him. D'Artagnan pressed it with a respect mixed with gratitude. Since his first arrival at Paris he had had constant

occasion to honour this excellent man, whom he had always found worthy, loyal, and great

His first visit was to Aramis, at whose house he had not been since the famous evening when he had followed Madame Bonacieux. Indeed, he had seldom seen the young musketeer, but every time he had seen him, he thought he noticed a deep sadness imprinted on his countenance

That evening also Aramis was sitting up, melancholy and thoughtful. D'Artagnan asked a few questions about this deep melancholy. Aramis pleaded as his excuse the religious exercises with which he was wont to occupy his leisure time

After the two friends had been chatting a few moments, one of M. de Tréville's servants entered, bringing a sealed packet.

"What is that?" asked Aramis

"The leave of absence you asked for," replied the lackey.

"For me? I have asked for no leave of absence!"

"Hold your tongue and take it," said D'Artagnan. "And there is a half-pistole for you, my friend, for your trouble. You will tell M. de Tréville that M. Aramis is very much obliged to him. Go."

The lackey bowed to the ground and departed

"What does all this mean?" asked Aramis

"Pack up all you want for a fortnight's journey and follow me. We start to-day for England."

"And what is the cause?" demanded Aramis

"Oh, you'll know it some day, Aramis, but at present I must imitate the discretion of *the doctor's niece*."

Aramis smiled as he remembered the tale he had related to his friends on a certain evening

"Well," said he, "I am ready to follow you. You say we are going—"

"To Athos's house now, and if you will come, I beg you to make haste, for we have already lost much time. By the way, inform Bazin."

"Will Bazin go with us?" asked Aramis

"Perhaps so At all events, it is best that he should follow us now to Athos's "

Aramus called his servant Bazin, and having ordered him to join them at Athos's residence "Let us go," said he, taking his cloak, sword, and his three pistols, at the same time opening two or three drawers to see whether he could not find a stray coin or two

When well assured that such a search was superfluous, he followed D'Artagnan, and both soon arrived at Athos's dwelling

They found him holding his leave of absence in one hand, and M de Tréville's note in the other

"Can you explain to me what this leave of absence and this letter I have just received mean ? " said the astonished Athos

"MY DEAR ATHOS I wish, since your health absolutely requires it, that you should rest for a fortnight Go and take the waters of Forges, or any that may be more agreeable to you, and get well as quickly as possible

"TRÉVILLE "

"Well, this leave of absence and this letter mean that you must follow me, Athos "

"To the waters of Forges ? "

"There or elsewhere "

"In the king's service ? "

"Either the king's or the queen's, are we not their Majesties' servants ? "

At that moment Porthos entered

"Zounds ! " said he, "here is a queer thing ! Since when, I wonder, did they grant men leave of absence in the musketeers without its being asked ? "

"Since the time," said D'Artagnan, "they have had friends who ask it for them "

"Aha ! " said Porthos, "it appears there's something fishy afoot ? "

"Yes, we are going—" said Aramis

"Going! To what country?" demanded Porthos.

"'Pon my word, I don't know much about it," said Athos.

"Ask D'Artagnan here"

"To London, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan

"To London!" cried Porthos, "and what on earth are we going to do in London?"

"That is what I am not at liberty to tell you, gentlemen. You must trust me"

"But in order to go to London a man should have some money, and I have none"

"Nor I," said Aramis

"Nor I," said Porthos

"Well, I have," added D'Artagnan, pulling out his treasure from his pocket, and placing it on the table "There are in this bag three hundred pistoles. Let us each take seventy-five, which will be quite enough to carry us to London and back. Besides, we may be sure that all of us will not reach London"

"Why so?"

"Because, according to all probability, some of us will be left on the road"

"What! we are going upon a campaign, it seems?"

"Yes, and a most dangerous one. I give you fair notice"

"Ah! but since we run the risk of being killed," said Porthos, "at least I should like to know what for"

"Great good that will do you!" said Athos

"And yet," said Aramis, "I am somewhat of Porthos's opinion"

"Is the king accustomed to give you reasons? No. He says to you very simply 'Gentlemen, there is fighting going on in Gascony or in Flanders, go and fight', and you go. Why? You don't even consider why."

"D'Artagnan is right," said Athos; "here are our three leaves of absence, which came from M de Tréville. And here are three hundred pistoles, which came from I don't know where. So let us go and get killed where we are told to go"

Is life worth the trouble of so many questions ? D'Artagnan, I am ready to follow you '

" And I," said Porthos

' And I, also,' said Aramis " And, indeed, I am not sorry to quit Paris I need distraction "

" Well, you will have distraction enough, gentlemen, be assured," said D'Artagnan

' And, now, when are we to go ? " asked Athos

" Immediately," replied D'Artagnan, " we have not a minute to lose "

" Hi ! Grimaud, Planchet, Mousqueton, Bazin ! " cried the four young men, calling their lackeys, " clean my boots, and fetch the horses "

Planchet, Grimaud, Mousqueton and Bazin set off at full speed

" Now let us draw up the plan of campaign," said Porthos. " Where do we go first ? "

" To Calais," said D'Artagnan " That is the shortest road to London "

" Well," said Porthos, ' my advice is this—'

" Speak—what is it ? "

" Four men travelling together would be suspicious D'Artagnan will give each of us his instructions I will set out first, by the Boulogne road, Athos will set out two hours later, by that to Amiens Aramis will follow us by that to Noyon D'Artagnan will go by what road he thinks best, in Planchet's clothes, while Planchet will follow us, dressed like D'Artagnan, in the uniform of the guards "

" Gentlemen," said Athos, " my opinion is that it is not proper to allow lackeys to have anything to do with such an affair A secret may, by chance, be betrayed by gentlemen, but it is almost always sold by lackeys "

" Porthos's plan appears to me to be impracticable," said D'Artagnan, " inasmuch as I do not know myself what instructions I can give you I am the bearer of a letter, that is all I have not, and I cannot make three copies of that

letter, because it is sealed. We must then, it seems to me, travel in company. This letter is here, in this pocket," and he pointed to the pocket which contained the letter. "If I should be killed, one of you must take it and continue the journey. If he is killed, it will be another's turn, and so on. Provided one man arrives, that is all that is necessary."

"Bravo, D'Artagnan! your opinion is mine," cried Athos. "Besides, we must be consistent. I am going to take the waters, you will accompany me. Instead of taking the waters of Foixes, I shall go and take sea-baths. I am free to do so. If any one wishes to stop us, I will show him M de Tréville's letter, and you will show your leaves of absence. If we are attacked, we will defend ourselves. If we are examined, we will stoutly maintain that we were only anxious to dip ourselves a certain number of times in the sea. They would have an easy time with four isolated men, whereas four men together make a troop. We will arm our four lackeys with pistols and carbines. If they send an army out against us we will give battle, and the survivor, as D'Artagnan says, will carry the letter."

"Well said," cried Aramis, "you don't often speak, Athos, but when you do speak, you speak like an angel. I agree to Athos's plan. And you, Porthos?"

"I agree to it, too," said Porthos, "if D'Artagnan approves of it. D'Artagnan, being the bearer of the letter, is of course the leader in the enterprise. Let him decide, and we will execute."

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "I decide that we adopt Athos's plan, and that we set off in half an hour."

"Agreed!" shouted the three musketeers in chorus.

And each one, putting his hand into the bag, took his seventy-five pistoles, and made his preparations for starting at the time appointed.

CHAPTER VI

THE EXPEDITION

At two o'clock in the morning, our four adventurers left Paris by the St Denis gate. As long as it was dark they remained silent. In spite of themselves they felt the influence of the darkness, and saw ambushes everywhere.

With the first rays of the sun their tongues became loosened, with day their gaiety revived.

All went well as far as Chantilly, where they arrived about eight o'clock in the morning. They needed breakfast, and alighted at the door of an inn recommended by a sign representing St Martin giving half his cloak to a poor man. They ordered the lackeys not to unsaddle the horses and to hold themselves in readiness to set off again immediately.

They entered the public room and seated themselves at table. A gentleman, who had just arrived by way of Dammarin, was seated at the same table, and was taking his breakfast. He opened the conversation by talking of the rain and fine weather. The travellers replied, he drank to their good health, and the travellers returned the compliment.

But at the moment Mousqueton came to announce that the horses were ready, and they were rising from the table, the stranger proposed to Porthos to drink the cardinal's health. Porthos replied that he asked no better, if the stranger in his turn would drink the king's health. The stranger cried that he acknowledged no other king but his Eminence. Porthos told him he was drunk, and the stranger drew his sword.

"You have committed a piece of folly," said Athos, "but it can't be helped. There is no drawing back. Kill your man, and rejoin us as soon as you can."

And all three mounted their horses and set out at a good pace, while Porthos was promising to perforate his adversary with all the thrusts known in the fencing schools.

"There goes one!" cried Athos, at the end of five hundred paces

"But why did that man attack Porthos, rather than any other of us?" asked Aramis

"Because Porthos was talking louder than the rest, and he took him for the leader of the party," said D'Artagnan

"I always said that this young man from Gascony was a well of wisdom," murmured Athos

And the travellers continued their route

At Beauvais they stopped two hours, as much to breathe their horses a little as to wait for Porthos. At the end of the two hours, as Porthos did not come and they heard no news of him, they resumed their journey

A league out from Beauvais, where the road was confined between two high banks, they fell in with eight or ten men who, taking advantage of the road being unpaved in this spot, appeared to be employed in digging holes and making muddy ruts

Aramis, not wishing to soil his boots, addressed them sharply. Athos wished to restrain him, but it was too late. The labourers began to jeer at the travellers, and this piece of insolence disturbed the equanimity even of the cool Athos, who urged his horse on against one of them

The men all immediately drew back to the ditch, from which each took a concealed musket. Our seven travellers thus found themselves outnumbered. Aramis received a ball which passed through his shoulder, and Mousqueton another ball which lodged in the fleshy parts at the lower portion of the back. Mousqueton alone fell from his horse, not because he was severely wounded, but not being able to see the wound, he deemed it to be more serious than it really was.

"It is an ambuscade!" shouted D'Artagnan; "don't waste a shot! forward!"

Aramis, wounded as he was, seized the mane of his horse, which carried him on with the others. Mousqueton's horse rejoined them, and galloped by the side of his companions.

"That horse will serve us for a day," said Athos

"I would rather have had a hat," said D'Artagnan, "mine was carried away by a ball. By my faith, it is very fortunate that the letter was not in it."

"Yes, but they'll kill poor Porthos when he comes up," said Aramis

"If Porthos were on his legs, he would have rejoined us by this time," said Athos. "My opinion is, that when they came to the point the drunken man proved to be sober enough."

They continued at their best speed for two hours, although the horses were so fatigued that it was feared they would soon refuse to proceed.

The travellers had chosen cross-roads, in the hope that they might meet with less interruption. But at Crevœur Aramis declared he could go no farther. In fact, it required all the courage which he concealed beneath his elegant form and polished manners to bear him so far. He grew paler every minute, and they were obliged to support him on his horse. They lifted him off at the door of an inn, left him with Bazin who was more embarrassing in a skinnish than useful and set forward again in the hope of sleeping at Amiens.

"Zounds!" said Athos, as soon as they were again in motion, "reduced to two masters and Guimard and Planchet! But I won't be their dupe, I will answer for it, I will neither open my mouth nor draw my sword between here and Calais. I swear by—"

"Let us waste no time in swearing," said D'Artagnan, "let us gallop, if our horses are willing."

And the travellers buried their rowels in their horses' flanks, who, thus vigorously stimulated, recovered their energy. They arrived at Amiens at midnight, and alighted at the Golden Lily inn.

The host appeared to be as honest a man as any on earth. He received the travellers with his candlestick in one hand and his cotton night-cap in the other. He proposed to lodge the two travellers each in a charming chamber, but, unfortunately,

these charming chambers were at the opposite extremities of the inn, and D'Artagnan and Athos declined them. The host replied that he had no other worthy of their Excellencies, but the travellers declared they would sleep in the common chamber, each upon a mattress, stretched upon the floor. The host insisted, but the travellers were firm, and he was obliged to comply with their wishes.

They had just prepared their beds and barricaded their door within, when someone in the courtyard knocked at the shutter. They demanded who was there, and, upon recognizing the voices of their lackeys, opened the shutter.

It was, in fact, Planchet and Grimaud.

"Grimaud can take care of the horses," said Planchet, "if you are willing, gentlemen, I will sleep across your doorway, and you will then be certain that nobody can disturb you."

"And what will you sleep upon?" said D'Artagnan.

"Here is my bed," replied Planchet, producing a bundle of straw.

"Come," said D'Artagnan, "you are right. Mine host's face does not please me at all—it is too civil by half."

"Nor me either," said Athos.

Planchet got in through the window, and installed himself across the doorway, while Grimaud went and shut himself up in the stable, undertaking that, by five o'clock in the morning, he and the four horses should be ready.

The night passed off quietly enough. About two o'clock in the morning, to be sure, somebody endeavoured to open the door. But as Planchet awoke in an instant, and cried "Who is there?" this person replied he was mistaken, and went away.

At four o'clock in the morning, a terrible noise was heard in the stables. Grimaud had tried to waken the stable-boys, and the stable-boys were beating him. When the window was opened the poor lad was seen lying senseless, with his head split open by a blow from a fork-handle.

Planchet went down into the yard, and proceeded to saddle the horses. But the horses were all used up. Mousqueton's horse, which had travelled for five or six hours without a rider the day before, alone might have been able to pursue the journey. But, by an unaccountable mistake, a veterinary surgeon, who had apparently been sent for to bleed one of the host's horses, had bled Mousqueton's.

This began to be annoying. All these successive accidents were, perhaps, the result of chance, but they might, quite as probably, be the outcome of a plot. Athos and D'Artagnan went out, while Planchet was sent to inquire if three horses could be bought in the neighbourhood. At the door stood two horses, fresh, strong, and fully equipped. These were just what they wanted. He asked where their owners were, and was informed that they had passed the night in the inn, and were then settling with the master.

Athos went in to pay the reckoning, while D'Artagnan and Planchet stood at the street-door. The host was in a low room at the back, into which Athos was ushered.

Athos entered without the least mistrust, and took out two pistols to pay the bill. The host was alone, seated before his desk, one of the drawers of which was partly open. He took the money which Athos offered him, and, after turning and turning it over and over in his hands, suddenly cried out that it was bad, and that he would have him and his companions arrested as counterfeiters.

"You scoundrel!" cried Athos, stepping towards him, "I'll cut your ears off!"

But the host stooped, took two pistols from the half-open drawer, pointed them at Athos, and called out for help.

At the same instant four men, armed to the teeth, entered by side doors, and rushed upon Athos.

"I am taken!" shouted Athos with all the power of his lungs, "Go on, D'Artagnan! spur, spur!" and he fired two pistols.

D'Artagnan and Planchet did not require to be twice

bidden They unfastened the two horses that were waiting at the door, leaped upon them, buried their spurs in their sides, and set off at full gallop

"Do you know what has become of Athos?" asked D'Artagnan of Planchet, as they galloped on

"Ah, sir," said Planchet, "I saw one fall at each of his shots, and he appeared to me, through the glass door, to be fencing with the others"

"Brave Athos!" murmured D'Artagnan, "and to think that we must leave him, while the same fate awaits us, perhaps, two paces hence! Forward, Planchet, forward! You are a brave fellow!"

"Did not I tell you, sir," replied Planchet, "that we Picards prove our value by use? Besides, I am in my own country here, and that puts me on my mettle"

And both, by free use of the spur, arrived at St Omer without drawing bridle At St Omer they breathed their horses with their bridles passed under their arms, for fear of accident, and having eaten a hasty morsel standing in the road, they set off again

At a hundred paces from the gates of Calais, D'Artagnan's horse sank under him, blood was flowing from both its eyes and its nose, and every effort to get it up again failed. There still remained Planchet's horse, but it had stopped short, and could not be persuaded to move

Fortunately, as we have said, they were within a hundred paces of the city They left their two horses upon the highway, and ran towards the port Planchet called his master's attention to a gentleman who had just arrived with his lackey, and who was about fifty paces ahead of them

They made all haste to come up with this gentleman, who appeared to be in a great hurry His boots were covered with dust, and he was asking whether he could cross over to England immediately.

"Nothing would be more easy," said the captain of a vessel which was ready to set sail, "but this morning an order

arrived that no one should be allowed to cross without express permission from the cardinal "

"I have that permission," said the gentleman, drawing a paper from his pocket, "here it is"

"Have it signed by the governor of the port," said the captain, "and give my boat the preference"

"Where shall I find the governor?"

"At his country-house"

"Where is that situated?"

"A quarter of a league from the city Look, you may see it from here—at the foot of that little hill, that slated roof"

"Very well," said the gentleman

And, with his lackey, he started for the governor's country-house

D'Artagnan and Planchet followed the gentleman at a distance of five hundred paces

Once outside the city, D'Artagnan quickly overtook the gentleman, as he was entering a little wood

"Sir," said D'Artagnan, "you appear to be in great haste"

"No one can be more so, sir"

"I am sorry for that," said D'Artagnan, "for, as I am in great haste likewise, I was going to beg you to do me a service"

"What service?"

"To let me go first"

"Impossible," said the gentleman "I have travelled sixty leagues in forty-four hours, and by to-morrow at mid-day I must be in London"

"I have performed the same distance in forty hours, and by to-morrow at ten o'clock in the morning I must be in London"

"Very sorry, sir, but I was here first, and will not go second"

"I am sorry, too, sir, but I arrived second and will go first."

"The king's service!" said the gentleman

"My own service!" said D'Artagnan

"It seems to me you are seeking a needless quarrel."

"Zounds! what did you expect it to be?"

"What do you want?"

"Would you like to know?"

"Certainly"

"Well, then, I want that order of which you are the bearer, seeing that I have none and must have one"

"You must be joking, I presume"

"I never joke"

"Let me pass!"

"You shall not pass"

"I will blow out your brains my fine young fellow. Hi, Lubin! my pistols!"

"Planchet," called out D'Artagnan, "take care of the lackey I will manage the master"

Planchet, emboldened by his first exploit, sprang upon Lubin, and, being strong and vigorous, he soon got him on his back, and placed his knee on his chest

"Go on with your job, sir," cried Planchet, "I have finished mine"

Seeing this, the gentleman drew his sword, and sprang upon D'Artagnan, but he had to deal with a tough customer

In three seconds D'Artagnan had wounded him three times, exclaiming at each thrust

"One for Athos! one for Porthos! and one for Aramis!"

At the third thrust the gentleman fell like a log

D'Artagnan believed him to be dead, or at least insensible, and approached him for the purpose of taking the order. But at the moment he stretched out his hand to search for it, the wounded man, who had not dropped his sword, picked him in the breast, crying

"And one for you!"

"And one for me! the best for the last!" cried D'Artagnan, in a rage, nailing him to the earth with a fourth thrust through his body.

This time the gentleman closed his eyes and fainted. D'Artagnan searched his pockets, and took from one of them the order for the passage. It was in the name of the Comte de Wardes.

Then, casting a glance on the handsome young man, scarcely twenty-five years of age, whom he was leaving lying there unconscious and perhaps dead, he uttered a sigh over that unaccountable destiny which leads men to destroy one another for the interests of strangers to whom their very existence is often unknown.

But he was soon roused from these reflections by Lubin, who uttered loud cries, and screamed for help with all his might.

Planchet grasped him by the throat, and pressed as hard as he could.

'Sil,' said he, "as long as I hold him in this manner, he can't cry, I'll be bound. But as soon as I let go, he will howl again as loud as ever. I have discovered that he's a Norman, and Normans are obstinate."

In fact, tightly held as he was, Lubin still contrived to make a noise.

'Wait!' said D'Artagnan, and, taking out his handkerchief, he gagged him.

'Now,' said Planchet, "let us bind him to a tree."

This being properly done, they drew the Comte de Wardes close to his servant, and as night was approaching, and as the wounded man and the bound man were both at some little distance within the wood, it seemed certain they would remain there till the next day.

'And now,' said D'Artagnan, "to the governor's house."

But you seem to be wounded," said Planchet.

'Oh, that's nothing! Let us despatch what is most pressing first, and we will attend to my wound afterwards, besides, it does not feel like a very dangerous one."

And they both set forward as fast as they could towards the worthy governor's country-seat.

The Comte de Wardes was announced

D'Artagnan was introduced

"You have an order signed by the cardinal?"

"Yes, sir," replied D'Artagnan, "here it is."

"Ah, it is quite regular and explicit," said the governor.

"Certainly it is," said D'Artagnan, "I am one of his most faithful servants."

"It appears that his Eminence is anxious to prevent some one from reaching England?"

"Yes, a certain D'Artagnan, a Béarnese gentleman, who left Paris in company with three friends of his, with the intention of going to London."

"Do you know him personally?" asked the governor.

"Whom?"

"This D'Artagnan."

"Oh, yes, perfectly well."

"Describe him to me, then."

"Nothing more easy."

And D'Artagnan gave, feature for feature, a description of the Comte de Wardes.

"Has he any one with him?"

"Yes, a lackey named Lubin."

"We will keep a sharp look-out for them. And if we lay hands upon them, his Eminence may be assured they shall be sent back to Paris under a strong escort."

"And by doing so, sir," said D'Artagnan, "you will earn the cardinal's gratitude."

"Will you see him on your return, count?"

"Certainly I shall."

"Tell him, I beg you, that I am his humble servant."

"I shall not fail."

And, delighted with this assurance, the governor signed the passport and delivered it to D'Artagnan, who lost no time in useless compliments, but thanked the governor, bowed, and departed.

Once out, he and Planchet set off as fast as they could, and,

by taking a circuituous road, avoided the wood, and re-entered the city by another gate

The vessel was quite ready to sail, and the captain waiting on the wharf

"Well?" said he, on perceiving D'Artagnan

'Here is my pass, signed,' said the latter

"And that other gentleman?"

'He will not go to-day," said D'Artagnan, 'but here, I'll pay you for the two of us'

In that case we will be gone," said the captain

'Yes, as soon as you please,' replied D'Artagnan

He leaped, with Planchet, into the boat. Five minutes later they were on board. And it was time, for they had sailed scarcely half a league when D'Artagnan saw a flash and heard a report—it was the cannon which announced the closing of the harbour

It was now time to look to his wound. Fortunately, as D'Artagnan had thought, it was not very dangerous. The point of the sword had struck a rib, and glanced along the bone. Besides, his shirt had stuck to the wound at once, and he had lost but very little blood.

But D'Artagnan was worn out with fatigue. A mattress was laid upon the deck for him, he threw himself upon it, and fell fast asleep.

At break of day they were still three or four leagues from the coast of England. The breeze had been light during the night, and they had made but little progress.

At ten o'clock the vessel cast anchor in the harbour of Dover, and at half-past ten D'Artagnan placed his foot on English soil, crying

"Here I am at last!"

But there was still work to do: they had to get to London. In England the post was well served. D'Artagnan and Planchet took post-horses, a postilion rode before them, and in four hours they were at the gates of the capital.

D'Artagnan did not know London, he did not know one

word of English, but he wrote the name of Buckingham on a piece of paper, and every one to whom he showed it pointed out to him the way to the duke's palace

The duke was at Windsor hunting with the king

D'Artagnan inquired for the duke's confidential valet, who, having accompanied him in all his travels, spoke French perfectly. He told this valet that he came from Paris, on an affair of life and death, and that he must speak with his master instantly

The confidence with which D'Artagnan spoke convinced Patrick, which was the name of the minister's servant. He ordered two horses to be saddled, and himself went as the young guardsman's guide. Planchet's strength had by this time become exhausted, and he was lifted from his horse as stiff as a stake. D'Artagnan seemed made of iron.

On their arrival at the castle they inquired for the duke, and learned that he was hawking with the king in the marshes, two or three leagues away.

In twenty minutes they were at the place designated, and Patrick soon caught the sound of his master's voice recalling his falcon.

' Whom shall I announce to my Lord Duke ? ' asked Patrick.

' The young man who one evening sought a quarrel with him on the Pont Neuf, in Paris '.

Rather a singular introduction ! "

' You will find that it is as good as any other '.

Patrick galloped off, reached the duke, and announced to him in these very words that a messenger awaited him.

Buckingham at once remembered the circumstance, and suspecting that the news now brought to him concerned something which was going on in France, he took only time to inquire where the messenger was, and, recognising at a distance the uniform of the guards, he put his horse into a gallop, and rode straight up to D'Artagnan. Patrick kept discreetly in the background.

"Has any misfortune happened to the queen?" cried Buckingham

"I believe not Nevertheless, I believe she is in some great peril from which your grace alone can extricate her"

"I?" cried Buckingham "What is it? I should be but too happy to render her any service! Speak! speak!"

"Take this letter," said D'Artagnan

"This letter! From whom does this letter come?"

"From her Majesty, I believe"

"From her Majesty!" said Buckingham, becoming so pale that D'Artagnan feared he was going to be ill—and he broke the seal

"What is this rent?" said he, showing D'Artagnan a place where it had been pierced through

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "I did not notice that, it must have been the Comte de Wardes's sword made that fine thrust, when he ran it into my breast"

"Are you wounded?" asked Buckingham, as he opened the letter

"Oh! nothing," said D'Artagnan, "only a scratch"

"Just heavens! what do I read?" cried the duke "Patrick, remain here, or rather join the king, wherever he may be, and tell his Majesty that I humbly beg him to excuse me, but an affair of the greatest importance calls me to London Come, sir, come!" and both set off toward the capital at full gallop

CHAPTER VII

D'ARTAGNAN IN LONDON

As they rode along D'Artagnan informed the duke of all the facts known to himself From these, added to his own recollections, he was enabled to form a pretty exact idea of the serious state of things, which the queen's letter, short and vague as it

was, conveyed to him. But what astonished him most was, that the cardinal, who was so deeply interested in preventing this young man from setting foot in England, had not succeeded in stopping him on the road. On the duke's expressing this astonishment, D'Artagnan told him of the precautions taken, and how, thanks to the devotion of his three friends, whom he had left behind bleeding at different points on the road, he had succeeded in getting off with the sword-thrust, which had pierced the queen's letter, and for which he had repaid M. de Wardes in such terrible fashion. While he was listening to this account, which was delivered with the greatest simplicity, the duke looked from time to time at the young man with astonishment, as though he could not comprehend how so much prudence, courage, and devotion could be displayed by a youth obviously not yet twenty years of age.

The horses went like the wind, and in a few moments they were at the gates of London. D'Artagnan imagined that on arriving in the city the duke would slacken his pace, but he did not in the least. He kept on at breakneck speed, heedless of upsetting those who stood in his way. As a matter of fact, in crossing the city two or three accidents of this kind did occur. But Buckingham did not even turn his head to see what became of those he had knocked down. D'Artagnan followed him amidst cries which very much resembled curses.

On entering the court of his palace Buckingham sprang from his horse, threw the bridle on its neck and sprang up the staircase. D'Artagnan did the same.

The duke walked so fast that D'Artagnan had some trouble in keeping up with him. He passed through several apartments furnished with an elegance unknown in France, and arrived at length in a bed-chamber which was a miracle both of taste and of splendour. In the alcove of this chamber was a door, made in the tapestry, which the duke opened with a small gold key suspended from his neck by a chain of the same metal. D'Artagnan remained discreetly behind. But

Buckingham, at the moment that he passed through the door, turned round, and seeing the young man's hesitation—

'Come in! come in!' cried he, "and if you have the good fortune to be admitted to her Majesty's presence, tell her what you have seen"

Encouraged by this invitation, D'Artagnan followed the duke, who closed the door after him

The room contained a life-size portrait of the queen, and beneath it was the casket containing the diamond studs

"Here," said he, drawing from the casket a large bow of blue ribbon all sparkling with diamonds, "here," said he, "are the precious studs which I had taken an oath should be buried with me. The queen gave them to me, the queen takes them from me. Her will be done in all things"

Then he kissed the studs with which he was about to part. All at once he uttered a terrible cry

"What is the matter?" exclaimed D'Artagnan anxiously, "what has happened to you, milord?"

"All is lost! all is lost!" cried Buckingham, turning as pale as death, "two of the studs are missing! there are but ten of them left!"

'Can you have lost them, milord, or do you think they have been stolen?' "

"They have been stolen!" replied the duke, "and it is the cardinal who has dealt me this blow. See, the ribbons which held them have been cut with scissors"

"If milord suspects they have been stolen—perhaps the person who stole them still has them"

'Let me think,' said the duke. "The only time I wore these studs was at a ball given by the king a week ago at Windsor. The Comtesse de Winter, with whom I had had a quarrel, became reconciled to me at the ball. That reconciliation was a jealous woman's vengeance. I have never seen her since. The woman is an agent of the cardinal's"

"Why, then, he has agents all over the world!" cried D'Artagnan

' Yes, yes, said Buckingham, gnashing his teeth with rage, " he is a terrible antagonist ! But when is the ball to take place ? "

' Next Monday "

' Next Monday ! Five days yet , that's more time than we need Patrick ! " cried the duke, opening the door of the chapel, ' Patrick ! "

His confidential valet appeared

' My jeweller and my secretary "

The valet went out with a promptness and silence that showed he was accustomed to obey blindly and without reply

But, although the jeweller had been summoned first, it was the secretary who first made his appearance. He found Buckingham seated at a table in his bed-chamber, writing orders with his own hand

" Master Jackson, ' said he, " go instantly to the lord chancellor and tell him that I desire him to execute these orders. I wish them to be published immediately ' "

' But, your Grace, if the lord chancellor questions me about the motives which may have led your Grace to adopt such an extraordinary measure, what reply shall I make ? "

" That such is my pleasure, and that I am responsible for my wishes to no man "

' Will that be the answer, " replied the secretary, smiling, " which he must transmit to his Majesty, if, by chance, his Majesty should have the curiosity to inquire why no vessel is to leave any of the ports of Great Britain ? "

" You are right, Master Jackson, " replied Buckingham. " He will say, in that case, to the king, that I am determined on war, and that this measure is my first act of hostility against France "

The secretary bowed and retired.

" We are safe on this side, " said Buckingham, turning towards D'Artagnan. " If the studs are not yet gone to Paris, they will not arrive till after you "

" How so, milord ? "

‘ I have just placed an embargo on all vessels at present in his Majesty’s ports, and, without special permission, not one will dare raise an anchor ’

D’Artagnan was lost in astonishment at the unlimited power enjoyed by Buckingham, and was still pursuing this train of reflection when the goldsmith entered. He was an Irishman, one of the most skilful of his craft, who himself confessed that he gained a hundred thousand pounds a year by the Duke of Buckingham.

Master O’Reilly,” said the duke to him, leading him into the private chamber, “ look at these diamond studs, and tell me what they are worth apiece ”

The goldsmith cast a glance at the elegant manner in which they were set, calculated, one with another, what the diamonds were worth, and replied without hesitation—

‘ Fifteen hundred pistoles each, your Grace ’

“ How many days would it require to make two studs exactly like them ? You see there are two wanting ”

‘ A week, your Grace ’

‘ I will give you three thousand pistoles each, if I can have them by the day after to-morrow ’

‘ Your Grace, you shall have them ’

You are a jewel of a man, Master O’Reilly. But that is not all. These studs cannot be trusted to anybody. The new ones must be made in this palace ”

‘ Impossible, your Grace, there is no one but myself who can make them so that the new may not be distinguished from the old ’

‘ Therefore, my dear Master O’Reilly, you are my prisoner, and should you wish to leave my palace now, you cannot, so make the best of it. Name to me such of your workmen as you stand in need of, and point out the tools they must bring ”

The goldsmith knew the duke, he knew all remarks would be useless, and instantly made up his mind.

‘ May I be permitted to inform my wife ? ’ said he

"You may even see her if you like, my dear Master O'Reilly. Your captivity shall be mild, be assured, and as every inconvenience deserves its compensation, here is, in addition to the price of the studs, an order for a thousand pistoles, so that you may forget the annoyance I am causing you."

D'Artagnan could not overcome the surprise created in him by this minister, who in so open-handed a manner played with men and millions.

The goldsmith accordingly wrote to his wife, sending her the order for the thousand pistoles, and charging her to send him in exchange his most skilful apprentice, an assortment of diamonds, of which he gave the names and the weights, and the necessary tools.

Buckingham led the goldsmith to the chamber destined for him, which, at the end of half an hour, was transformed into a workshop. Then he placed a sentinel at each door, with an order to admit nobody, upon any pretence, but his valet, Patrick. It is scarcely necessary to add that the goldsmith, O'Reilly, and his assistant, were prohibited from going out on any account.

This point settled, the duke turned to D'Artagnan.

"Now, my young friend," said he, "England is all our own. What do you wish for? What do you desire?"

"A bed," replied D'Artagnan. "I confess that is at present what I stand most in need of."

Buckingham assigned D'Artagnan a chamber adjoining his own.

An hour later the ordinance was published in London that no vessel bound for France should leave the ports—not even the packet-boat with letters. Everyone concluded that this was a declaration of war between the two kingdoms.

Two days later, by eleven o'clock, the two diamond studs were finished, and they were such perfect imitations, so exactly like the others, that Buckingham could not tell the new from the old, and the most practised in such matters would have been as completely deceived as he was.

He immediately called D Artagnan

' Here," said he to him, ' are the diamond studs that you came to fetch , and be my witness that I have done all that human power could do "

' Rest assured, milord I will tell what I have seen But does your Grace mean to give me the studs without the casket ? "

' The casket would only encumber you You will say that I keep it "

" I will perform your commission word for word, milord "

And now," resumed Buckingham, looking earnestly at the young man, " how can I possibly requite you ? "

D'Artagnan coloured up to the eyes He saw that the duke was searching for some means to make him accept something, and the idea that the blood of himself and his friends was about to be paid for with English gold was strangely repugnant to him

Let us understand each other, milord," replied D'Artagnan, ' in order that there may be no mistake I am in the service of the king and queen of France, and form part of the company of M des Essart's guards, who, as well as his brother-in-law, M de Tréville, is particularly attached to their Majesties And truly, at this moment, when there is question of war, I confess to you that I see in your Grace only an Englishman, and, consequently, an enemy, whom I should have much greater pleasure in meeting on the field of battle than in the park at Windsor or the corridors of the Louvre All which, however, will not prevent me from executing my commission in every point, even from laying down my life, if there be need, to accomplish it, but there is nothing in all this for which your Grace—personally—should thank me "

" We say, ' Proud as a Scotchman,' " murmured the duke of Buckingham

" And we say, ' Proud as a Gascon,' " replied D'Artagnan.

' The Gascons are the Scots of France "

D'Artagnan bowed to the duke, and was retiring

"And so you are going away ? But where ? and how ?"

"That's true !"

"Confound it ! these Frenchmen have no forethought !"

"I had forgotten that England was an island, and that you were the king of it"

"Go to the port, ask for the brig 'Le Sund,' and give this letter to the captain, he will convey you to a little port where no one can possibly be on the watch for you, and where only fishing-smacks ordinarily run in"

"What is the name of that port ?"

"Saint-Valery, but listen On your arrival there you will go to a mean inn, without a name and without a sign, a mere sailor's lodging-house You cannot mistake it, there is but one"

"And then ?"

"You will ask for the host, and will repeat to him the word—*Forward !*"

"Which means ?"

"*En avant*, that is the pass word He will give you a horse ready saddled, and will point out to you the road you are to take You will find, in like manner, four relays on your route. If you call, at each of these relays, to give your Paris address, the four horses will follow you there You already know two of them, and you appeared to appreciate them like a true lover of horseflesh They were those we rode, and you may rely upon me for the others not being inferior to them These horses are equipped for the field However proud you may be, you will not refuse to accept one of them, and to request your three companions to accept the others Besides, that is making war against us The end excuses the means, as you Frenchmen say, does it not ?"

"Yes, milord, I accept them," said D'Artagnan, "and if it please God, we will make good use of your gifts"

"Well, now, your hand, young man, perhaps we shall soon meet on the battle-field, but, in the meantime, we shall part good friends, I hope ?"

"Yes, milord, but with the hope of soon becoming enemies?"

"Be satisfied on that head I promise you"

"I depend upon your word, milord"

D'Artagnan bowed to the duke, and quickly made his way to the port opposite the Tower of London. He found the vessel that had been named to him, delivered his letter to the captain, who, after having it signed by the warden of the port, set sail at once.

Fifty vessels were waiting ready to sail.

As he was passing alongside of one of them, D'Artagnan fancied he perceived on board the lady of Meung, the same whom the unknown gentleman had styled milady, and whom D'Artagnan had thought so handsome. But, thanks to the current of the river and a fair wind, his vessel passed so quickly that he lost sight of her in a moment.

The next day, about five o'clock in the morning, he landed at Saint-Vallery.

D'Artagnan went instantly in search of the inn, and easily recognised it by the shouts proceeding from it. War between England and France was talked of as near and assured, and some jolly sailors were carousing over it.

D'Artagnan made his way through the crowd, approached the host, and pronounced the word, "*Forward!*" The host instantly made him a sign to follow him, went out with him through the door which opened into the yard, led him to the stable where a horse ready saddled was waiting for him, and asked him if he needed anything else.

"I want to know the route I am to follow," said D'Artagnan.

"Go from here to Blangy, and from Blangy to Neufchâtel. At Neufchâtel, go to the 'Golden Harrow' inn, give the password to the landlord, and you will find, as you found here, a horse ready saddled."

"Have I anything to pay?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"Everything is paid," replied the host, "and liberally. Go, then, and may God conduct you safely."

" Amen ! " cried the young man, and set off at full gallop

Four hours later he was in Neufchâtel. There he strictly followed the instructions he had received. At Neufchâtel, as at Saint-Valéry, he found a saddled horse awaiting him. He was about to remove the pistols from the saddle he had vacated to the one he was about to occupy, but he found the holsters furnished with similar pistols.

" Your address at Paris ? "

" Residence of the Guards, company of Des Essarts "

" Good," replied the landlord

" Which road must I take ? " demanded D'Artagnan, in his turn

" The road to Rouen, but you will leave the city on your right. You must stop at the little village of Écouis in which there is but one inn, the 'Shield of France'. Don't condemn it from appearances, you will find a horse in the stables quite as good as this "

" The same password ? "

" Exactly "

" Farewell, master ! "

" A good journey, sir ! Do you want anything ? "

D'Artagnan shook his head in reply, and set off at full speed. At Écouis, the same scene was repeated. He found as obliging a host and as fresh a horse. He left his address as he had done before, and set off again, at the same pace, for Pontoise. At Pontoise he changed his horse for the last time, and at nine o'clock galloped into the court of M. de Tréville's mansion. He had covered nearly sixty leagues in twelve hours.

M. de Tréville received him as if he had already seen him that same morning, only, when pressing his hand a little more warmly than usual, he informed him that M. des Essarts's company was on duty at the Louvre, and that he might repair to his post.

[D'Artagnan thus enables the queen to outwit the cardinal, and is rewarded by her with a magnificent ring. He finds that

Madame Bonacieux has again been kidnapped by the man of Meung, and he sees the latter in close conversation with Milady. He fights a duel with Lord Winter, Milady's brother-in-law, secures an introduction to her, discovers that she is a spy of the cardinal's, a branded criminal, and the faithless wife of Athos. He is summoned to an interview by the cardinal.]

CHAPTER VIII

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARDINAL RICHELIEU

THE usher introduced D'Artagnan into the presence of the cardinal and then retired without speaking a word.

The cardinal leaned his elbow on his manuscript, his cheek on his hand, and looked at the young man for a moment. No one had a more searching eye than Cardinal Richelieu, and D'Artagnan felt this look run through his veins like a fever.

But he kept a brave face, holding his hat in his hand, and awaiting his Eminence's good pleasure with neither too much assurance, nor too much humility.

"Sir," said the cardinal, "are you a D'Artagnan from Béarn?"

"Yes, monseigneur," replied the young man.

"If I am not mistaken there are several branches of the D'Artagnans at Tarbes and its vicinity," said the cardinal, "to which do you belong?"

"I am the son of that D'Artagnan who served in the religious wars under the great King Henry, his gracious Majesty's father."

"Ah! yes. Seven or eight months ago you started from your country to seek your fortune in the capital?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"You came through Meung, where something befell you, I don't very well remember what, but something."

"Monseigneur," said D'Artagnan, "this is what happened to me—"

"No matter, no matter!" resumed the cardinal, with a smile which proved that he knew the story as well as he who wished to relate it. "You had a letter of introduction to M de Tréville, had you not?"

"Yes monseigneur, but in that unfortunate affair at Meung—"

"The letter was lost," replied his Eminence, "yes, I know that, but M de Tréville is a skilful reader of faces, he knows men at first sight, and he placed you in the company of his brother-in-law, M des Essarts, leaving you to hope that some day you would enter the musketeers."

"Monseigneur is quite correctly informed," said D'Artagnan.

"Since that time many things have happened to you. For example, you took with your friends a journey to the waters of Foixes, they stopped on the way, but you went on. The reason was very simple—you had business in England."

"Monseigneur," said D'Artagnan, quite confused, "I went—"

"Hunting at Windsor or elsewhere, that concerns nobody. I am acquainted with the circumstances, because it is my business to know everything. On your return you were received by an august personage, and I perceive with pleasure that you preserve the souvenir she gave you."

D'Artagnan placed his hand on the diamond which the queen had given him.

"The day after that, you received a visit from Cavois," resumed the cardinal, "he went to desire you to call at my palace, you did not pay that visit, and you were wrong."

"Monseigneur, I feared I had incurred your Eminence's disfavour."

"How could that be, sir? By following the orders of your superiors with more intelligence and courage than another would have done, how could you incur disfavour when you

deserve praise ? I punish people who do not obey, and not those who, like you, obey but too well '

"In short," continued the cardinal, "as I have heard nothing of you for some time, I wished to know what you were doing Besides, you owe me some thanks you must yourself have remarked how considerably you have been treated in all these circumstances "

D'Artagnan bowed respectfully

'That," continued the cardinal, ' arose not only from a feeling of natural justice, but also from a plan I had marked out for you "

D'Artagnan became more and more astonished

'I wished to explain this plan to you on the day you received my first invitation, but you did not come Fortunately nothing has been lost by this delay, and now you are about to hear it Sit down there, before me, Monsieur D'Artagnan, you are enough of a nobleman not to listen standing "

And the cardinal pointed with his finger to a chair for the young man, who was so amazed that he waited for a second sign from the cardinal before he obeyed

'You are brave, Monsieur D'Artagnan," continued his Eminence, ' you are prudent, which is still better I like men of head and heart Don't be afraid," said he, smiling, "by men of heart I mean men of courage, but though you are young and have hardly entered on life you have powerful enemies, if you do not take heed, they will destroy you '

'Alas ! monseigneur ! "' replied the young man, ' very easily, no doubt, for they are strong and well supported, while I am alone ! "'

"Yes, that is true But, alone as you are, you have already done much, and will do still more, I doubt not And yet you need, I believe, to be guided in the adventurous career you have chosen, for, if I mistake not, you came to Paris with the ambitious idea of making your fortune "

"I am at the age of extravagant hopes, monseigneur," said D'Artagnan.

"There are no extravagant hopes save for fools, sir, and you are a man of brains. Now, what would you say to an ensign's commission in my guards, and a company after the campaign?"

"Ah! monseigneur!"

"You accept, do you not?"

"Monseigneur," replied D'Artagnan, with an embarrassed air

"What! do you decline?" cried the cardinal, in astonishment

"I am in his Majesty's guards, monseigneur, and I have no reason to be dissatisfied."

"But it seems to me that my guards are also his Majesty's guards, and whoever serves in a French corps serves the king."

"Monseigneur, your Eminence has misunderstood my words."

"You want a pretext? I understand. Well, a pretext you have. Advancement, the opening campaign, the opportunity which I offer you,—so much for the world. As regards yourself, the need of certain protection. I know you are a man of resolution, and your services, well directed, instead of leading you to misfortune, might bring you great advantage. Come, reflect and decide."

"Your goodness confounds me, monseigneur," replied D'Artagnan, "and I recognise in your Eminence a generosity that makes me mean as an earth-worm, but since monseigneur permits me to speak freely—"

D'Artagnan paused

"Yes—speak."

"Then I must tell your Eminence that all my friends are in the king's musketeers and guards, and, by a most unfortunate fatality, all my enemies are in your Eminence's service. I should, therefore, be ill received here and ill regarded there, if I accepted what monseigneur offers me."

"Do you possibly conceive the proud idea that I do not offer you a place equal to your merit, sir?" asked the cardinal, with a disdainful smile

"Monseigneur, your Eminence is a hundred times too good to me, on the contrary, I think I have not yet proved myself worthy of your goodness. The siege of Rochelle is about to begin, monseigneur, I shall serve under your Eminence's eye, and if I have the good fortune to conduct myself at this siege in such a manner as to attract your attention, well and good! Then I shall at least have to my credit some brilliant exploit to justify the protection with which you deign to honour me. Everything must have its own time, monseigneur, hereafter, perhaps, I shall have the right to give myself at present, I should appear to be selling myself."

That is to say, you refuse to serve me, sir," said the cardinal, in a tone of vexation, through which, however, no little esteem manifested itself, "remain free, then, and preserve your hatreds and your sympathies."

"Monseigneur—"

'Well! well!'" said the cardinal, "I am not angry with you, but you are aware it is enough for us to defend and reward our friends, we owe nothing to our enemies, and yet I will give you a piece of advice: take good care of yourself, Monsieur D'Artagnan, for, from the moment I withdraw my hand from you, I would not give an obol for your life."

'I will try to do so, monseigneur,'" replied the Gascon, with a fine confidence.

'Remember then in the future should some mischance happen to you,'" said Richelieu pointedly, "that I came to seek you, and that I did all in my power to prevent this misfortune befalling you."

'Whatever may happen,'" said D'Artagnan, placing his hand on his heart and bowing, 'I shall entertain an eternal gratitude toward your Eminence for what you are now doing for me.'

"Well, let it be, then, as you have said, Monsieur D'Artagnan, we shall meet again after the campaign, I will have my eye on you, for I shall be there," replied the cardinal,

pointing with his finger to a magnificent suit of armour he was to wear, ' and on our return, well—we will settle our account ! ’ ”

“ Ah ! monseigneur ! ” cried D Artagnan, ‘ spare me the weight of your disfavour , remain neutral, monseigneur. if you find that I act as a gentleman ought to act ’ ”

“ Young man,” said Richelieu, if I am able once again to say to you what I have said to you to-day, I promise you to do so ”

This last expression of Richelieu's conveyed a terrible doubt , it alarmed D'Artagnan more than a threat would have done, for it was a warning The cardinal was apparently trying to preserve him from some threatened misfortune He opened his mouth to reply, but, with a wave of his hand, the cardinal dismissed him

D'Artagnan went out, but at the door his heart almost failed him, and he was on the point of going back But Athos's noble, stern face occurred to him , if he made the proposed compact with the cardinal, Athos would no longer give him his hand, Athos would renounce him

This was the fear that restrained him Thus powerful is the influence of a truly great character on all its surroundings

D'Artagnan descended the same staircase by which he had entered, and found Athos and the four musketeers waiting for him at the gate, and beginning to grow uneasy

When they reached Athos's residence, Aramis and Porthos inquired the cause of this strange interview , but D'Artagnan confined himself to telling them that Richelieu had sent for him to propose that he should enter his guards with the rank of ensign, and that he had refused

“ And you were right,” cried Aramis and Porthos, with one voice

Athos fell into a deep reverie and made no remark. But when they were alone, he said—

“ You have done your duty, D'Artagnan, but yet perhaps you have done wrong ”

D'Artagnan sighed deeply, for this voice responded to a secret voice in his soul, which told him that great misfortunes were awaiting him.

The whole of the next day was spent in preparations for the forthcoming departure to Rochelle. D'Artagnan went to take leave of M. de Tréville. At that time it was still believed that the separation of the musketeers and the guards would be only temporary, as the king was holding his parliament that very day, and proposed to set out the day after. M. de Tréville contented himself with asking D'Artagnan if he could do anything for him, but D'Artagnan answered that he was supplied with all he wanted.

That night all the comrades belonging to M. des Essarts's guards, and to M. de Tréville's musketeers, who had struck up a mutual friendship, met together. They were parting perhaps never to meet again. The night, therefore, was a somewhat motuous one, as may be imagined, for on such occasions gloomy forebodings can be dispelled only by reckless behaviour.

At the first sound of the morning trumpet the friends separated, the musketeers hastening to M. de Tréville's mansion, the guards to that of M. des Essarts. Each of the captains then led his company to the Louvre, where the king reviewed them.

The king was dull and appeared ill. In fact, the evening before, a fever had seized him while he was holding parliament. He had nevertheless decided on setting out that same evening, and, in spite of all remonstrances, he persisted in holding the review, hoping, by a vigorous effort, to conquer the disease which was beginning to lay hold of him.

The review over, the guards set forward alone on their march, the musketeers waiting for the king.

D'Artagnan marched off with his company. On arriving at the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, he turned round to look at the Bastille. Now, as he kept his eyes on the Bastille he did not notice Milady, who, mounted upon a light bay

horse, was pointing him out to two evil-looking men who immediately came up to the ranks to observe him more closely. To their questioning looks Milady signified that he was the man. Then, certain that there could no longer be any mistake in the execution of her orders, she gave spurs to her horse and disappeared.

The two men then followed the company, and, on leaving the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, mounted two horses fully equipped, which a servant was holding in expectation of their coming.

CHAPTER IX

AT THE SIEGE OF ROCHELLE

THE siege of Rochelle was one of the great political events of Louis XIII's reign, and one of the cardinal's great military enterprises. It is, therefore, necessary to say here a few words about it, for many details of this siege are so intimately connected with the story we have undertaken to relate that it is impossible to pass it over in silence.

The political ends the cardinal had in view when he undertook this siege were of the highest importance. Let us unfold them first, and then we will pass on to his private ends, which, perhaps, had not less influence on his Eminence than the former.

Of the important cities given up by Henry IV to the Huguenots as places of safety, at this period only Rochelle remained. But the persistent part played by the Calvinists in every civil revolt, and their intrigues in time of war, made it desirable that the last bulwark of this dangerous sect should be destroyed.

Spaniards, English and Italian malcontents, adventurers of all nations, soldiers of fortune of every sect, flocked at the first summons to the standards of the Protestants, and organized themselves as it were, into a vast association, the

various branches of which gradually spread over all parts of Europe

Rochelle, which had derived a new importance from the ruin of the other Calvinist cities, was the focus of dissension. Moreover, its port was the last gateway in the kingdom of France open to the English, and by closing it against England, our eternal enemy, the cardinal completed the work of Joan of Arc and the Duc de Guise.

But, as we have hinted beside these aims of the minister, which belong to history, the chronicler is forced to recognize the petty aims of the jealous rival.

Richelieu's object was not only to rid France of an enemy, but to avenge himself on a rival, moreover this vengeance was to be great and brilliant, and worthy in every way of a man who held in his hand the forces of a whole kingdom.

Richelieu knew that in fighting England he was fighting Buckingham—that in triumphing over England he would triumph over Buckingham.

On his side, Buckingham, while pretending to maintain the honour of England, was moved by interests exactly similar to the cardinal's. Buckingham, also, was pursuing a private feud. Since Buckingham had been prevented from entering France as an ambassador, he wished to enter it as a conqueror.

The first advantage had been gained by the duke of Buckingham. Arriving unexpectedly in sight of the Isle of Ré, with ninety vessels and nearly twenty thousand men, he had surprised the Comte de Torrac, who commanded for the king in the island, and he had, after a sanguinary conflict, effected a landing.

The Comte de Torrac withdrew into the citadel St. Martin with his garrison, and threw a hundred men into a little fort called La Prée.

This event had hastened the cardinal's resolution, and until the king and he could come to take command of the siege of Rochelle, which was determined on, he had sent the Duc

d'Orléans to direct the first operations, and had ordered all the troops he could dispose of to march toward the scene of war. Our friend D'Artagnan belonged to this detachment.

The king, as we have said, was to follow as soon as parliament was ended. But on concluding the session of parliament on the 28th of June, he felt himself attacked by fever. He was, notwithstanding, anxious to set out, but his illness becoming more serious, he was obliged to stop at Villeion.

Now, whenever the king stopped, the musketeers stopped. The consequence was that D'Artagnan, who was still in the guards, found himself, for the time at least, separated from his good friends, Athos, Aramis, and Porthos. This separation, which was at the moment merely a disappointment, would certainly have become a cause of serious anxiety had he guessed by what unknown dangers he was surrounded.

He arrived, however, without accident, in the camp established before Rochelle, about the 10th of September, 1627.

Everything was unchanged. The Duke of Buckingham and his English, masters of the Isle of Ré, were still besieging, though unsuccessfully, the citadel of St. Martin and the fort of La Prée, and hostilities with Rochelle had begun, two or three days before, in the vicinity of a fort which the Duc d'Angoulême had just built near the city.

The guards, under M. des Essarts's command, took up their quarters at the Minimes.

But, as we know, D'Artagnan, preoccupied by his ambition of gaining admission into the musketeers, had formed but few friendships among his comrades. He found himself isolated, and given over to his own reflections. His reflections were not cheerful. During the two years he had been in Paris, by mixing in public affairs, he had made a great enemy of the cardinal, before whom the most powerful nobles of the kingdom, even the king himself, trembled. That man had the power to crush him, and yet he had not done it. To a mind so quick as D'Artagnan's, this forbearance seemed a light affording a glimpse of a better future.

And then he had made another enemy, not so much to be feared, but nevertheless, he instinctively felt not to be despised this enemy was Milady.

True he had acquired the queen's protection and good-will, but the queen's good will was, just then, an additional cause for persecution, and her protection we know, was of little avail, judging from the fate of Madame Bonacieux.

One solid gain indeed was his, the diamond, worth five or six thousand livres, which he wore on his finger, but even this diamond, supposing that D'Artagnan, in his ambitious projects, wished to keep it, as a reminder of the queen's gratitude, had not, at the moment, since he could not part with it, any more value than the pebbles he trod under his feet. We say than the pebbles he trod under his feet, for D'Artagnan made these reflections while walking alone along a pretty little road leading from the camp to the village of Angoutin. Now, these reflections had led him farther than he intended, and the day was beginning to decline, when, in the last rays of the setting sun, he thought he saw a musket-barrel glittering behind a hedge.

D'Artagnan had a quick eye and ready wit. He realized that the musket had not come there of itself and that he who carried it had not concealed himself behind a hedge with any friendly intentions. He determined, therefore, to give it as wide a berth as he could, when behind a rock on the opposite side of the road, he perceived the muzzle of another musket-barrel.

It was evidently an ambushade.

The young man cast a glance at the first musket, and with a certain degree of anxiety saw that it was levelled in his direction, but as soon as he perceived that the mouth of the barrel was motionless, he threw himself flat on the ground, at the same instant the gun was fired, and he heard a ball whistle over his head.

No time was to be lost. D'Artagnan sprang up with a bound, and at the same instant the ball from the other musket

tore up the stones at the very place on the road where he had thrown himself face to the ground

D'Artagnan was not one of those uselessly brave men who seek a ridiculous death, in order that they may win the reputation of never having given way before an enemy, besides, courage was out of the question now—he had fallen into a trap

“Should there be a third shot,” said he to himself ‘I am a lost man’

And immediately, taking to his heels, he ran toward the camp with the swiftness of the young men of his country, so renowned for their agility, but great as was his speed, the man who had first fired, having had time to reload, fired a second shot, so well aimed this time that the bullet struck his hat and carried it ten paces from him

However, as D'Artagnan had no other hat, he picked up this as he ran, and arrived at his quarters, very pale and quite out of breath. He sat down without saying a word to anybody, and began to reflect

This event might have been the product of one of three causes

The first and the most natural was that it might be an ambuscade of the Rochellais, who would not be sorry to kill one of his Majesty's guards, first because there would be one enemy less, and also because this enemy might have a well-furnished purse in his pocket

D'Artagnan took his hat, examined the hole made by the bullet, and shook his head. The ball was not a musket-ball, it was an arquebuse-ball. It could not, then, be a military ambuscade, as the ball was not of the regulation size

It might be a kind remembrance of the cardinal's. It will be remembered that at the very moment when, owing to the blessed ray of the sun, he perceived the gun-barrel, he was thinking with astonishment on his Eminence's forbearance towards him.

But D'Artagnan shook his head. For people against whom he had only to stretch out his hand, his Eminence had rarely recourse to such means.

It might be a vengeance of Milady's

That was the most probable !

He vainly tried to remember the faces or dress of the assassins, he had run away so swiftly that he had not had leisure to notice any thing.

" Ah ! my poor friends ! " murmured D'Artagnan, " where are you ? How sadly I need you ! "

D'Artagnan passed a very bad night. Three or four times he started up imagining that a man was approaching his bed to stab him. Nevertheless, day dawned without any untoward event.

But D'Artagnan realized that what was deferred was not forgotten. He remained all day in his quarters, assigning to himself the reason that the weather was bad.

At nine o'clock the next morning, the drums beat the salute. The Duc d'Orléans was inspecting the posts. The guards ran to their arms, and D'Artagnan took his place in the midst of his comrades.

Monsieur passed along the front of the line. Then all the superior officers approached him to pay him their compliments. M. des Essarts, captain of the guards, among the rest.

A moment later D'Artagnan imagined that M. des Essarts made him a sign to call him. He waited for another indication from his superior, for fear he might be mistaken, but when this sign was repeated, he left the ranks, and advanced to receive his orders.

" Monsieur is about to ask for some gallant men for a dangerous mission, but one that will do honour to those who shall accomplish it, and I made you a sign in order that you might hold yourself in readiness. "

" Thank you, sir ! " replied D'Artagnan, who desired nothing better than to distinguish himself in the lieutenant-general's eyes.

It appeared that the Rochellais had made a sortie during the night, and had retaken a bastion which the royal army had gained possession of two days before, the point was, to ascertain, by reconnoitring, how strongly the enemy were guarding this bastion

After a few minutes, Monsieur raised his voice and said

"I want three or four volunteers for this mission, led by a trusty man"

"The trusty man I have at hand, monseigneur," said M des Essais, pointing to D'Artagnan, "and for the four or five volunteers, monseigneur has but to make his intentions known, and the men will not be wanting"

'Four gallant men who will risk being killed with me'" said D'Artagnan, raising his sword

Two of his comrades of the guards immediately sprang forward, and two other soldiers at once joined them, so D'Artagnan declined all others, as he was unwilling to injure the chances of those who came forward first

It was not known whether, after taking the bastion, the Rochellais had evacuated it or left a garrison in it, and the object was to examine the place and ascertain this

D'Artagnan set out with his four companions, and proceeded along a trench, the two guardsmen marched abreast with him, and the two soldiers followed behind

Screened by the *revêtement*, they came within a hundred paces of the bastion. There, on turning round, D'Artagnan perceived that the two soldiers had disappeared

He thought that they had stayed behind from fear, and so he continued to advance

At the turning of the counterscarp they found themselves within about sixty paces of the bastion

No one was to be seen, and the bastion seemed abandoned

The three men were deliberating whether to proceed any farther, when suddenly a circle of smoke enveloped the bastion, and a dozen balls came whistling round D'Artagnan and his two companions

They knew what they wanted to know the bastion was guarded. A longer stay in this dangerous spot would therefore have been uselessly imprudent. D'Artagnan and his two companions turned their backs, and beat a hasty retreat.

On arriving at the angle of the trench which was to serve them as a rampart, one of the guardsmen fell, a ball had passed through his breast. The other kept on his way to camp.

D'Artagnan was unwilling to abandon his companion thus, and stooped down to raise him and assist him in regaining the lines. But at this moment two shots were fired, one ball struck the head of the already wounded guardsman, and the other flattened itself against a rock, after passing within two inches of D'Artagnan.

The young man turned quickly round, for this attack could not come from the bastion, which was masked by the angle of the trench. The idea of the two soldiers who had abandoned him occurred to his mind and reminded him of the assassins of two evenings before. So he resolved this time to satisfy himself on this point, and fell on his comrade's body as though he were dead.

He instantly saw two heads appear above an abandoned earthwork, within thirty paces of him, they were the heads of his two soldiers. D'Artagnan had not been mistaken. These two men had only followed him for the purpose of assassinating him, expecting that the young man's death would be placed to the enemy's account.

But, as he might be merely wounded, and might accuse them of their crime, they came up to him with the purpose of making sure of him. Fortunately, deceived by D'Artagnan's trick, they neglected to reload their guns.

When they were within ten paces of him, D'Artagnan, who in falling had taken great care not to let go his sword, suddenly got up, and with one leap came upon them.

The assassins realized that if they fled toward the camp without killing their man, they would be accused by him,

so they immediately decided to desert to the enemy. One of them took his gun by the barrel and, using it as a club, aimed a terrible blow at D'Artagnan, who avoided it by springing to one side, but by this movement he left a free passage to the bandit, who at once darted off toward the bastion. As the Rochellais who guarded the bastion were ignorant of the intentions of the man they saw coming toward them, they fired at him, and he fell, struck by a ball which broke his shoulder.

Meantime, D'Artagnan had thrown himself on the other soldier, attacking him with his sword, the struggle did not last long, the wretch had nothing to defend himself with but his discharged arquebuse, the guardsman's sword slipped down the barrel of the now useless weapon, and pierced the thigh of the assassin, who fell.

D'Artagnan immediately placed the point of the weapon at his throat.

Oh, do not kill me ! ' cried the bandit. " Pardon pardon, sir, and I will tell you all ' ' "

Is your secret important enough for me to spare your life, I wonder ? ' asked the young man, withholding his aim.

' Yes ! if you think existence worth anything to a man of twenty-two, handsome and brave, who has everything to hope for, as you have ' "

" Wretch ! " cried D'Artagnan, " listen, speak quickly ! Who employed you to assassinate me ? "

A woman whom I don't know, but who is called Milady ' "

" But if you don't know this woman, how do you know her name ? "

' My comrade knew her, and called her so, she made the bargain with him, and not with me ; he has at this moment in his pocket a letter from her, which should be of great importance to you, judging by what I have heard ' "

" But how are you concerned in this ambuscade ? "

" He proposed to me to undertake it with him, and I agreed ' "

"And how much did she give you for this fine enterprise?"

"A hundred louis"

"A good enough reward!" said the young man, laughing, "she evidently thinks I am worth something! A hundred louis! Well, that was a temptation for two miserable creatures like you, so I understand you accepted it, and I grant you my pardon, but on one condition!"

"What is that?" said the soldier, uneasy at perceiving that all was not over.

"That you go and fetch me the letter your comrade has in his pocket"

"Why," cried the bandit, "that is only another way of killing me. How can you desire me to go and fetch that letter under fire from the bastion?"

"Nevertheless you must make up your mind to go and fetch it, or I swear you shall die by my hand."

"Pardon! sir, have pity on me!" cried the bandit, throwing himself on his knees and leaning on his hand, for he began to grow weak through loss of blood.

"I must have that letter," said D'Artagnan, "so no more delay, no more hesitation, or else, however much I may dislike soiling my sword a second time with the blood of a wretch like you, I swear on the faith of an honourable man—"

And at these words D'Artagnan made such a threatening gesture that the wounded man sprang up.

"Stop, stop!" cried he, regaining courage from very terror, "I will go—I will go!"

D'Artagnan took the soldier's arquebuse, made him go on before him, and drove him towards his companion by picking him on with his sword from behind.

It was a frightful thing to see this unfortunate being, leaving a long track of blood on the ground he passed over, pale with approaching death, trying to drag himself along, without being seen, to his accomplice's body, which lay at twenty paces from him.

Terror was so strongly painted on his face, which was

covered with a cold sweat, that D'Artagnan took pity on him, and casting on him a look of contempt—

"Well," said he, "I will show you the difference between a man of true courage and a coward, stay, I will go"

And, with a light step, an eye on the watch, observing the movements of the enemy and taking advantage of all the aid afforded by the nature of the ground, D'Artagnan succeeded in reaching the second soldier

There were two means of attaining his object—to search him on the spot, or to carry him away, making a buckler of his body, and then search him in the trench

D'Artagnan preferred the second means, and lifted the assassin on his shoulders at the very moment the enemy fired

A slight shock, the dull thud of three balls penetrating the flesh, a last cry, a convulsion of agony, proved to D'Artagnan that the man who had just tried to assassinate him had saved his life

D'Artagnan regained the trench, and threw the body down by the wounded man, who was as pale as death

He instantly began the search—a leather pocket-book, a purse containing, evidently, a part of the sum which the bandit had received, a dice-box and dice, formed the dead man's heritage

He left the box and dice where they fell, flung the purse to the wounded man, and eagerly opened the pocket-book

Among some unimportant papers he found the following letter, the letter which he had gone to fetch at the risk of his life

"Since you have lost track of that woman, and she is now in safety in the convent, which you should never have allowed her to reach, try, at least, not to miss the man, if you do, you know that my hand reaches far, and that you shall repay me very dearly the hundred louis you have had of me."

No signature Nevertheless it was plain the letter came from Milady He kept it, therefore, as a piece of evidence and as he was in safety behind the angle of the trench, he

began to question the wounded man. He confessed that he had undertaken, with his comrade, the man just killed, to abduct a young woman about to leave Paris by the La Villette gate, but having stopped to drink at an inn, they had missed the carriage by ten minutes.

‘ But what were you to have done with the woman ? ’ asked D’Artagnan, in great agitation.

“ We were to have conveyed her to a house in the *Place Royale*,” said the wounded man.

‘ Yes ! yes ! ’ murmured D’Artagnan, “ that’s the place, Milady’s own residence ! ”

Then the young man, shuddering, felt what a terrible thirst for vengeance impelled this woman to destroy him, as well as those who loved him, and how well acquainted she must be with the affairs of the court, since she had discovered all this. Doubtless she owed this information to the cardinal.

But he also perceived, with a feeling of genuine joy, that the queen must have at last discovered the prison in which poor Madame Bonacieux was expiating her devotion, and that she had freed her from that prison.

This thought completely restored his natural kindness of heart. He turned to the wounded man, who had watched with intense anxiety all the varying expressions of his countenance, and holding out his arm to him—

“ Come,” said he, “ I will not abandon you thus. Lean upon me, and let us return to camp.”

“ Yes,” said the man, who could scarcely believe in such magnanimity, “ but is it not to have me hanged ? ”

“ You have my word,” said he, “ for the second time I give you your life.”

The wounded man sank upon his knees, and again kissed his preserver’s feet, but D’Artagnan, who no longer had a motive for staying so near the enemy, cut short the evidences of his gratitude.

The guardsman who had returned at the first discharge had announced the death of his four companions. There *was*

therefore much astonishment and delight in the regiment when the young man was seen coming back safe and sound.

D'Artagnan explained the sword wound of his companion by a sortie which he invented. He told of the other soldier's death and the perils they had encountered. The story of his exploit brought him no little fame. The whole army talked of the expedition for a whole day, and Monsieur sent him his compliments on it.

Moreover, as every great action brings its own reward, D'Artagnan's resulted in his regaining the peace of mind he had lost. He now believed that he might indulge in a feeling of security since one of his two enemies was killed, and the other devoted to his interests.

This feeling of security only proved that D'Artagnan did not yet know Milady.

CHAPTER X

THE ANJOU WINE

At first a report reached the camp that the state of the king's health was almost hopeless, but this was soon followed by the news of his convalescence, and it was said that, as he was very anxious to be at the siege in person, he would set forward as soon as he could mount a horse.

In the meantime, Monsieur, who knew that he might be superseded in his command at any moment by the Duc d'Angoulême, or Bassompierre, or Schomberg, who were all eager for the post, did but little, wasted his time in idle experiments, and dared not risk any great enterprise to drive the English from the Isle of Ré, where they still besieged the citadel St. Martin and the fort of La Prée. Meanwhile, the French were still besieging Rochelle.

D'Artagnan, as we have said, had become more tranquil, he felt uneasiness only at not hearing from his three friends.

But one morning early in November everything was explained to him by the following letter, dated from Villeroy

" MONSIEUR D'ARTAGNAN

' MM Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, after giving an entertainment at my house and having a very gay time, created such a disturbance that the provost of the castle, a very strict man, has had them under arrest for some days, but I fulfil the order they have given me, by forwarding to you a dozen bottles of my Anjou wine, with which they are much taken, they are desirous that you should drink to their health in their favourite wine

' I have accordingly done so, and am, sir, with great respect,

" Your very humble and obedient servant,

" GODEAU,

" Steward of the Musketeers "

" That's good ! " cried D'Artagnan, " they think of me in their pleasures, as I thought of them in my troubles Well, I will certainly drink to their health with all my heart, but I will not drink alone "

And D'Artagnan went to seek two guardsmen with whom he had formed a closer intimacy than with the others, to invite them to drink with him this delicious Anjou wine which had just been sent to him from Villeroy

One of the two guardsmen was engaged that evening, and the other for the next So the meeting was fixed for the day after that

D'Artagnan, on his return, sent the twelve bottles of wine to the mess-room of the guards, enjoining that great care should be taken of it At nine in the morning of the day appointed, the dinner being fixed for twelve o'clock, D'Artagnan sent Planchet to assist in making the preparations

Planchet, very proud of being raised to the dignity of butler, determined, like an intelligent fellow, to superintend everything himself, and with this object called in to assist him the lackey of one of his master's guests, named Fourreau, and

the pretended soldier who had tried to kill D'Artagnan, and who, belonging to no corps, had been in D'Artagnan's service, or rather Planchet's, ever since D'Artagnan had saved his life

At the hour fixed for the banquet, the two guests arrived, took their places, and the dishes were placed on the table. Planchet waited, napkin on arm, while Fourreau uncoiled the bottles, and Brisemont, as the convalescent was named, carefully poured into glass decanters the wine, which seemed to be rather muddy after the joltings of the journey. As the first bottle of this wine was a little thick at the bottom, Brisemont poured the dregs into a glass, and D'Artagnan allowed him to drink it, for the poor wretch had not as yet much strength.

The guests, after drinking their soup, were on the point of raising the first glass of wine to their lips, when suddenly the cannon roared from Fort Louis and Fort Neuf. Instantly the guardsmen, imagining this was the signal of some unexpected attack, either by the besieged or the English, snatched up their swords, D'Artagnan, not less eager than they, did the same, and all three ran out, to repair to their posts.

But scarcely were they out of the mess-room, when they learned the cause of the noise. cries of "Hurrah for the king ! hurrah for the cardinal !" were resounding on every side, and drums were beating in all directions.

It appeared that the king had in his impatience made a forced march, and had just arrived with all his household and a reinforcement of ten thousand troops. His musketeers rode in front of him and behind him. D'Artagnan, standing with his company drawn up in line, saluted with an expressive gesture his friends, whom he followed with his eyes, and M. de Tréville, who instantly recognized him.

The ceremony of reception over, the four friends were soon in one another's arms.

"By Jove !" cried D'Artagnan, "you could not have arrived more opportunely, the dinner cannot have had time

to cool—can it gentlemen ? ” added the young man turning to the two guardsmen whom he introduced to his friends

‘ Ah ! ha ! ’ said Porthos, “ so it seems we were feasting ! ”

Is there any drinkable wine in your hut ? ” asked Athos
“ Why ! there is your own, my dear friend, ’ replied D’Artagnan

“ Our wine ! ” exclaimed Athos, in astonishment

“ Yes, the wine you sent me ”

“ We sent you wine ? ”

‘ Yes you know what I mean the wine from the vineyards of Anjou

“ Yes, I know very well the wine you mean ’

‘ The wine you like ”

Doubtless, when I can get neither champagne nor burgundy ”

“ Well ! in the absence of champagne and burgundy you must be satisfied with this ”

“ And so we have become connoisseurs, and have had some Anjou wine sent us, have we ? ” exclaimed Porthos

‘ No it is the wine that was sent me with your compliments ”

‘ With our compliments ? ’ exclaimed the three musketeers

‘ Did you send this wine, Aramis ? ” said Athos

“ No , and you, Porthos ? ”

‘ No , and you, Athos ? ’

“ No ! ”

“ Well, but if it was not you, it was your steward,” said D’Artagnan

‘ Our steward ! ”

“ Yes, your steward, Godcau, the steward of the musketeers ”

“ Pon my word ! never mind where it comes from,” said Porthos , “ let us taste it, and if it is good, let us drink it ”

“ No,” said Athos, “ don’t drink wine which comes from an unknown source ”

"You are right, Athos," said D'Artagnan "Did none of you order Godeau to send me wine?"

"No' and yet you say he has sent you some with our compliments?"

"Here is his letter," said D'Artagnan, and he exhibited the note to his comrades

"That is not his writing!" said Athos, "I know it. Before we left Villemer, I settled the accounts of our mess."

"It is a forged letter," said Porthos, "we have not been under arrest."

"D'Artagnan," said Aramis, in a reproachful tone, "how could you believe that we had made a disturbance?"

D'Artagnan grew pale, and a convulsive trembling shook all his limbs

"Thou alarmest me!" said Athos, who never used *thee* and *thou* but upon very particular occasions, "what has happened?"

"Hasten! hasten! friends!" cried D'Artagnan; "a horrible suspicion crosses my mind! Can this be another vengeance on that woman's part?"

Athos now turned pale

D'Artagnan rushed towards the mess-room, the three musketeers and the two guards following him

The first object that met D'Artagnan's eyes, on entering the dining-room, was Busemont, stretched on the ground and rolling about in horrible convulsions

Planchet and Fourreau, pale as death, were trying to relieve him, but it was plain that all assistance was useless—all the features of the dying man were distorted in his struggle against death

"Ah!" cried he, perceiving D'Artagnan, "ah! it is frightful! You pretend to pardon me, and you poison me!"

"I," cried D'Artagnan, "I, wretched man! What do you mean?"

"I say that you gave me the wine, I say that you told me

to drink it, I say you wished to avenge yourself on me, and I say that it is horrible ! ”

Do not think so, Busemont ” said D’Artagnan , “ do not think so , I swear to you, I protest— ’

‘ Oh ! but God is above ! God will punish you ! God grant that you may one day suffer what I suffer ! ’ ”

“ I swear to you,” said D’Artagnan, throwing himself down by the dying man, that I did not know the wine was poisoned, and I was going to drink it as you did ”

‘ I do not believe you ’ cried the soldier

And he expired in still more fearful torments

‘ Frightful ! frightful ! ’ murmured Athos, while Porthos broke the bottles and Aramis gave orders, a little too late to send for a confessor

‘ Oh ! my friends,’ said D’Artagnan, “ you come once more to save my life, not only mine, but the lives of these gentlemen Gentlemen,” continued he, addressing the guardsmen, I request that you will say nothing about this adventure, great personages may have had a hand in what you have seen, and if talked about, the evil would only recoil on us ”

‘ Ah ! siii ! ’ stammered Planchet, more dead than alive, ‘ ah ! siii ! what a narrow escape I have had ! ’ ”

“ How, sirrah ! so you were going to drink my wine, were you ! ”

“ To the king’s health, sir , I was going to drink a small glass of it, if Foureaux had not told me some one was calling me ”

“ Alas ! ” said Foureaux, whose teeth chattered with terror, ‘ I wanted to get him out of the way that I might have a drink by myself ’ ”

‘ Gentlemen,” said D’Artagnan, addressing the guardsmen, “ you will easily see that a feast will be a very melancholy affair, after what has just taken place ; so I beg you to accept my excuses, and to put off the party till another day ”

The two guardsmen courteously accepted D’Artagnan’s

excuses, and perceiving that the four friends desired to be alone, they retired

The young guardsman and the three musketeers, left to themselves, looked at each other with an expression which plainly indicated that they all realized the seriousness of the situation

"In the first place," said Athos, "let us leave this room, a dead man, especially the victim of a violent death, is not agreeable company"

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, "I commit this poor wretch's body to your care. Let him be interred in holy ground. He committed a crime, it is true, but he repented of it"

And the four friends left the room. Planchet and Fourreau undertook the duty of performing the funeral ceremonies for Briseмонт

The manager gave them another room, and served them with boiled eggs, whilst Athos went himself to draw water at the spring. In a few words Porthos and Aramis were informed of all that had occurred

"Well," said D'Artagnan to Athos, "you see, dear friend, that it is war to the death!"

Athos shook his head

"The fact is we cannot remain like this, with a sword hanging eternally over our heads," said Athos, "we must get out of this position"

"But how?"

"Listen. Try to have an interview with her, and make an agreement with her, say to her. 'Whether it be peace or war, I give you my word of honour as a gentleman never to say anything about you, never to do anything against you. You, on your part, must take a solemn oath to remain neutral towards me. If not, I will apply to the chancellor, I will apply to the king, I will apply to the hangman, I will move the courts against you, I will denounce you as branded, I will bring you to trial, and if you are acquitted—well, on the word of a gentleman, I will kill you as I would a mad dog'"

"I like the scheme well enough," said D'Artagnan, "but how to meet her?"

"Time, dear friend, time brings opportunity—the more we venture, the more we gain, when we know how to wait."

"Yes, but to wait surrounded by assassins and poisoners?"

"Bah!" said Athos, "God has preserved us hitherto, God will preserve us still."

"Yes, he has, besides we are men, and all things considered, it is our business to risk our lives, but she—" he added in an undertone.

"She—who?" asked Athos.

"Madame Bonacieux."

"Ah! that's true," said Athos, "I had forgotten her."

"Well," said Aramis, "but have you not learned by the letter you found on the dead assassin that she is in a convent? One may be very comfortable in a convent, and as soon as the siege of Rochelle is over, I promise you, as far as I am concerned—"

"Well," said Porthos, "it appears to me that there is a very simple way."

"What?" asked D'Artagnan.

"You say she is in a convent?" replied Porthos.

"Yes."

"Well, as soon as the siege is over, we'll carry her off from that convent."

"But we must find out what convent she is in."

"You are right," said Porthos.

"I think I have it," said Athos. "Do you not believe, D'Artagnan, that it is the queen who has selected the convent for her?"

"At least I imagine so."

"Then," said Aramis, "I take upon myself to get news of her."

"You, Aramis!" cried the three friends, "how?"

"By the queen's almoner, with whom I am very intimately acquainted."

And with this assurance, the four friends, having finished their modest repast, separated, promising to meet again that evening, D'Artagnan returned to the Mimmes, and the three musketeers repaired to the King's quarters, where they had to prepare their lodging

[In a lonely tavern, called "The Infidel" Athos overhears Cardinal Richelieu commission Milady to persuade the Duke of Buckingham to withdraw the English expedition from Rochelle, and, in the event of his refusal to do so, to accomplish his death. In return, Milady demands the assassination of D'Artagnan. On the cardinal's departure from the tavern Athos confronts Milady, threatens her with death if any harm befalls D'Artagnan, and extorts from her a paper that the cardinal had given her. He then suffers her to leave for England on her mission to the duke]

CHAPTER XI

THE WAGER

On rejoining his three friends, D'Artagnan found them assembled in the same room. Athos was meditating, Porthos was twirling his moustaches, Aramis was reading prayers out of a charming little book of meditations, bound in blue velvet.

"By Jove! gentlemen," said he, "I hope what you have to tell me is worth the trouble, or else, I warn you, I will not pardon you for making me come here instead of getting a little rest, after a night spent in taking and dismantling a bastion. Ah! why were you not there, gentlemen? It was warm work."

"We were in a place where it was not very cold!" replied Porthos, giving his moustache the peculiar twirl that was his habit.

"Hush!" said Athos.

"Oh ! ho !" said D'Artagnan, comprehending the musketeer's slight frown , ' it appears there is something new in hand "

"Aramis," said Athos, "you went to breakfast the day before yesterday at the Infidel tavern, I believe ? "

"Yes "

"How did you fare ? "

"I had but little to eat , the day before yesterday was a fast-day, and they had nothing but meat "

"What ? " said Athos , " no fish at a scaport ? "

"They say," said Aramis, resuming his pious reading, that the dyke which the cardinal is making drives them all out into the open sea "

"But that is not quite what I asked you," replied Athos , "I want to know if you were left alone, and nobody interrupted you "

"Why, I think there were not many intruders , yes, Athos, I know what you mean , we shall do very well at the Infidel "

"Let us go to the Infidel, then , for here the walls are like sheets of paper "

D'Artagnan, who was accustomed to his friend's manner of acting, and perceived immediately by a word, a gesture, or a sign from him that things were serious, took Athos's arm, and went out with him without saying a word , Porthos followed, chatting with Aramis

On their way they fell in with Grimaud , Athos beckoned him to come with them , Grimaud, as usual, silently obeyed , the poor lad had by this time almost forgotten how to speak

When they arrived at the tap-room of the Infidel it was seven o'clock in the morning, and day had broken , the three friends ordered breakfast, and went into a room in which, the host said, they were not likely to be disturbed

Unfortunately, the hour was badly chosen for a private conference , reveille had just been sounded , every one was shaking off the drowsiness of night, and, to dispel the humid morning air, came to take a glass at the bar . dragoons,

Swiss, guardsmen, musketeers, light-horsemen, succeeded one another with a rapidity which might answer the landlord's purposes very well, but agreed ill with the views of the four friends. So they replied very civilly to the salutations, healths, and jokes of their companions.

'Come,' said Athos, 'we shall get involved in some pretty quarrel, and we don't need one just now. D'Artagnan, tell us what sort of a night you had, and we will describe ours afterwards.'

'Ah! yes,' said a light-horseman, lolling about with a glass of brandy in his hand which he was leisurely sipping, 'ah! yes! You gentlemen of the guards were in the trenches last night, and you had a bone to pick with the Rochellais.'

D'Artagnan looked at Athos to know if he ought to reply to this intruder, who joined unasked in their conversation.

'Well,' said Athos, 'don't you hear M. de Busigny does you the honour of asking you a question? Relate what happened during the night, since these gentlemen wish to know.'

'Did you not take a bastion?' asked a Swiss, who was drinking rum out of a beer-glass.

'Yes, sir,' said D'Artagnan, bowing, 'we had that honour, as you may have heard, we actually put a barrel of powder under one of the angles, which, when it blew up, made a very pretty breach, not only that, but as the bastion was not built yesterday, all the rest of the building was much shaken.'

'And which bastion was it?' asked a dragoon, who was carrying a goose on his sabre to have it cooked.

'The bastion Saint-Gervais,' replied D'Artagnan, 'from behind which the Rochellais have been annoying our workmen.'

'Was the affair hot?'

'Yes, moderately so, we lost five men, and the Rochellais eight or ten.'

'Balzempleu!' said the Swiss, who, notwithstanding the

admirable stock of oaths possessed by the German language, had acquired the habit of swearing in French

'But,' said the light-horseman, 'probably they will send pioneers this morning to repair the bastion'

Yes, probably," said D'Artagnan

'Gentlemen," said Athos, 'I have a wager to propose'

'Ah! ha! a wager!' cried the Swiss

'What is it?' said the light-horseman

"Stop a bit," said the diagoon, placing his sabre like a spit upon the two large iron dogs which held the fire-brands on the hearth, 'stop a bit, I am in it You dog of a landlord! a dipping-pan instantly, that I may not lose a drop of the fat of this estimable bird'

'You are quite right," said the Swiss, "kooose-krease is koot vith bastiy"

'There!' said the diagoon "Now for the wager We are all attention, M Athos"

Yes! now for the wager!" said the light-horseman

"Well, Monsieur de Busigny, I will bet you," said Athos, 'that my three companions, MM Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan, and myself, will go and breakfast in the bastion Saint Gervais, and will remain there an hour, by the watch, whatever the enemy may do to dislodge us'

Porthos and Aramis looked at each other, they began to understand

"You are going to get us all killed out of hand," said D'Artagnan, in Athos's ear

"We are much more likely to be killed," said Athos, "if we do not go"

'Pon my word! gentlemen," said Porthos, turning round upon his chair and twirling his moustache, "that's a fine offer, I consider"

"I take it," said M. de Busigny, "now let us fix the stake"

"Why, you are four, gentlemen," said Athos, "and we are four, a dinner for eight—will that do?"

"Capitally," replied M de Busigny

"Perfectly well," said the dragoon

"Dat suits me," said the Swiss

The fourth auditor, who during all this conversation had played a mute part, nodded to show that he acquiesced in the proposition

"The breakfast for these gentlemen is ready," said the landlord

"Well, bring it in," said Athos

The landlord obeyed Athos called Grimaud, pointed to a large basket standing in a corner, and made a sign to him to wrap the food up in the napkins

Grimaud perceived that it was to be a picnic, packed the viands into the basket, added the bottles, and then took the basket on his arm

'But where are you going to eat my breakfast?' said the landlord

"Of what consequence is that to you, if you are paid for it?" said Athos, and he threw two pistoles majestically on the table

"Shall I give you the change, sir?" said the host

'No, only add two bottles of champagne and the difference will be for the napkins'

The landlord had not made quite so good a bargain as he had at first hoped for, but he made up for it by shipping in two bottles of Anjou wine instead of two bottles of champagne

'Monsieur de Busigny,' said Athos, "will you be so kind as to set your watch by mine, or permit me to regulate mine by yours?"

"Certainly, sir," said the light-horseman, drawing from his fob a very handsome watch set with diamonds, "half-past seven," said he.

"Thirty-five minutes after seven," said Athos, "we shall know that I am five minutes faster than you, sir."

And bowing to all the astonished spectators, the young men started off for the bastion Saint-Gervais, followed by Grimaud

carrying the basket, ignorant of where he was going, but, in accordance with the passive obedience which Athos had taught him, not even thinking of asking

As long as they were within the camp, the four friends did not exchange a word, besides, they were followed by inquisitive loungers, who, hearing of the wager, were anxious to see how they would succeed. But when once they had passed the line of encircvallation, and found themselves in the open field, D'Artagnan, who was completely ignorant of what all this meant, thought it was time to demand an explanation

'And now, my dear Athos,' said he, "be kind enough to tell me where we are going?"

'Why, you see, plainly enough, we are going to the bastion'

"But what are we going to do there?"

"Why, you know perfectly well we are going to breakfast there'

'But why did we not breakfast at the Infidel?"

'Because we have some very important things to talk over, and it was impossible to talk five minutes in that tavern without being annoyed by all those importunate fellows, who keep coming in, saluting you, and talking to you, yonder, at least," said Athos, pointing to the bastion, "they will not come and disturb us"

'It seems to me," said D'Artagnan, with that prudence which was so naturally allied with his great courage, "it seems to me that we could have found some retired place on the downs or by the seashore"

"Where we should have been seen all four conferring together, so that at the end of a quarter of an hour the cardinal would have been informed by his spies that we were holding a council"

"Yes," said Aramis, "Athos is right 'Let them flee to the deserts'"

"A desert would not have been amiss," said Porthos, "but the question was where to find it"

"There is no desert where a bird cannot fly over one's head, or a fish leap out of the water, or a rabbit come out of its burrow, and I believe that birds, fishes, and rabbits have all become the cardinal's spies. Better, then, carry out our undertaking, from which we cannot now retreat without shame. We have laid a wager, a wager which could not be foreseen, and of which I defy anyone to guess the true cause. In order to win it, we are going to stay an hour in the bastion. We shall either be attacked, or we shall not. If we are not, we shall have all the time to talk, and nobody will hear us, for I will answer for it the walls of the bastion have no ears. If we are attacked, we will talk of our affairs just the same, and in defending ourselves we shall cover ourselves with glory. You see that everything is to our advantage."

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "but we shall certainly be caught by a bullet."

"Well, my dear fellow," replied Athos, "you know well that the bullets most to be dreaded are not from open enemies."

"But, for such an expedition, we surely ought to have brought our muskets."

"You are stupid, friend Porthos, why load ourselves with useless burdens?"

"I think a good musket, a dozen cartridges, and a powder-flask are not very useless things in face of an enemy."

"Well," replied Athos, "didn't you hear what D'Artagnan said?"

"What did D'Artagnan say?"

"D'Artagnan said that in the attack last night, eight or ten Frenchmen were killed and as many Rochellais."

"What then?"

"They did not have time to plunder the bodies, did they?—for the moment they had something more urgent to do."

"Well?"

"Well, we shall find their muskets, their cartridges, and their powder-flasks, and instead of four muskets and a dozen

balls, we shall have fifteen guns and a hundred charges to fire "

" Oh ' Athos," said Aramis, ' truly thou art a great man "

Porthos bowed in sign of acquiescence D'Artagnan alone did not appear to be quite satisfied

Grimaud, no doubt, shared the young man's misgivings, for, seeing that they continued to advance toward the bastion, he pulled his master by the skirt of his coat

Where are we going ? " asked he by a gesture

Athos pointed to the bastion

' But," said the silent Grimaud, still in the same dialect, ' we shall leave our skins there '

Athos raised his eyes and his finger toward heaven

Grimaud put his basket on the ground and sat down, shaking his head

Athos took a pistol from his belt, looked to see if it was properly primed, cocked it, and placed the muzzle close to Grimaud's ear

Grimaud was on his legs again, as if moved by a spring

Athos then made him a sign to take up his basket, and to walk on first Grimaud obeyed All that Grimaud gained by this little pantomime was that he was promoted from the rear-guard to the vanguard

When they reached the bastion, the four friends turned round

More than three hundred soldiers of all kinds were assembled at the gate of the camp, and in a separate group they could distinguish M de Busigny, the dragoon, the Swiss, and the fourth party to the wager

Athos took off his hat, put it on the end of his sword, and waved it in the air All the spectators returned him his salute, accompanying this politeness with a loud hurrah, which could be plainly heard After which they all four disappeared into the bastion, where Grimaud had already preceded them.

CHAPTER XII

BREAKFAST IN THE BASTION SAINT-GERVAIS

As Athos had foreseen, the bastion was occupied only by a dozen dead bodies, French and Rochellais

"Gentlemen," said Athos, who had assumed command of the expedition, "while Grimaud is laying out the breakfast, let us begin by getting together the guns and cartridges, we can talk while performing that task. These gentlemen," added he, pointing to the dead bodies, "will not hear us."

"But still we might throw them into the ditch," said Porthos, "after assuming ourselves they have nothing in their pockets."

"Yes," said Athos, "that's Grimaud's business."

"Well, then," cried D'Artagnan, "let Grimaud search them, and throw them over the walls."

"By no means," said Athos, "they may be useful to us."

"These dead bodies useful to us?" exclaimed Porthos.

"Why, you are crazy, my dear friend."

"Judge not rashly," say the Bible and the cardinal," replied Athos. "how many guns, gentlemen?"

"Twelve," replied Aramis.

"How many cartridges?"

"A hundred."

"That's quite as many as we shall want, let us load the guns."

The four musketeers went to work. As they were loading the last musket, Grimaud announced that breakfast was ready.

Athos replied, still by gesture, that it was all right, and showed Grimaud a kind of pepper-box, making him understand that he was to stand as sentinel. Only, to alleviate the tedium of the duty, Athos allowed him to take a loaf, two outlets, and a bottle of wine.

"And now, to table," said Athos.

The four friends sat down on the ground, with their legs crossed, like tailors

' There now,' said D'Artagnan, " as there is no longer any fear of being overheard, I hope you are going to let us into your secret "

I hope, at the same time, to provide you with amusement and glory, gentlemen," said Athos " I have taken you for a very pleasant walk , here is a most delicious breakfast , and five hundred people yonder, as you may see through the loopholes, are taking us for heroes or madmen, two classes of imbeciles sufficiently alike "

' But the secret ' " said D'Artagnan

The secret is," said Athos, " that I saw Milady last night "

D Artagnan was lifting a glass to his lips, but at the mention of Milady, his hand shook so that he put the glass on the ground again, for fear of spilling the contents

' And where ? " demanded he

' About two leagues from here, at the Red Dovecote tavern "

' In that case I am lost," said D'Artagnan

' No, not quite so yet," replied Athos , " for by this time she must have left the shores of France "

But, after all," said Porthos, ' who is Milady ? "

' A very charming woman ' " said Athos, sipping a glass of sparkling wine " That rascally landlord ' " cried he , " he has given us Anjou wine instead of champagne, and fancies we know no better ' Yes," continued he, " a very charming woman, to whom our friend D'Artagnan has given some offence for which she tried to pay him off, a month ago, by having him killed by two musket-shots , a week ago by attempting to poison him , and yesterday by demanding his head of the cardinal "

" What ' by demanding my head of the cardinal ? " cried D'Artagnan

' Yes, that is as true as the Gospel," said Porthos , " I heard her with my own ears."

"So did I," said Aramis

"But I can never escape," said D'Artagnan, "with such enemies. First, there is my unknown man of Meung, then De Wardes, on whom I have inflicted three wounds, next Milady, whose secret I have discovered, and last the cardinal, whose vengeance I have balked"

"Well," said Athos, "that only makes four, and we are four—one for one. By Jove! if we may believe the signs Grimaud is making, we are about to have to do with a much greater number of people"

"What's the matter, Grimaud?" said Athos. "Considering the seriousness of the case, I permit you to speak, my friend, but be brief, I beg of you. What do you see?"

"A troop"

"How many persons?"

"Twenty men"

"What sort of men?"

"Sixteen pioneers, four soldiers"

"How far distant?"

"Five hundred paces"

"Good! We have just time to finish this fowl, and to drink one glass of wine to your health, D'Artagnan!"

"To your health," repeated Porthos and Aramis

"Well, then, to my health! though I do not believe that your good wishes will be of much service to me"

"Bah!" said Athos, "'God is great,' and the future is in His hands"

Then, swallowing the contents of his glass, which he put down close to him, Athos arose carelessly, took the nearest musket, and went to one of the loop-holes.

Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan did the same. Grimaud was ordered to place himself behind the four friends, in order to reload their guns

In a moment the troop appeared, they were advancing along a sort of branch trench, which gave communication between the bastion and the city

"By Jove!" said Athos, "it was hardly worth while to disturb ourselves for twenty fellows armed with pickaxes, mattocks, and shovels! Gumaud needed only to have made them a sign to go away, and I am sure they would have left us alone."

"I doubt that," replied D'Artagnan, "for they are advancing very resolutely. Besides, in addition to the pioneers, there are four soldiers and a corporal armed with muskets."

"That's because they didn't see us," said Athos.

"Faith!" said Aramis, "I vow it goes against the grain to fire on these poor rascals."

"He is a bad priest," said Porthos, "who pities heretics."

"In truth," said Athos, "Aramis is right—I will warn them."

"What in Heaven's name are you going to do?" cried D'Artagnan, "you will be shot, my dear fellow!"

But Athos paid no heed to his advice, and, mounting on the breach, with his musket in one hand and his hat in the other

"Gentlemen," said he, bowing courteously, and addressing the soldiers and the pioneers, who, astonished to see him, stopped at fifty paces from the bastion, "gentlemen, a few friends and myself are engaged at breakfast in this bastion. Now, you know nothing is more disagreeable than being disturbed when one is at breakfast. We request you, then, if you really have business here, to wait till we have finished our repast, or to come later on, unless you are wisely desirous of deserting the rebels, and will come and drink with us to the health of the king of France."

"Take care, Athos!" cried D'Artagnan, "don't you see they are aiming at you?"

"Yes, yes," said Athos, "but they are only rabble—very bad marksmen, they will be sure to miss me."

In fact, at the same instant four shots were fired, and the

bullets flattened themselves against the wall round Athos, but not one hit him. Four shots replied to them, almost instantaneously, but much better aimed than those of the aggressors. Three soldiers fell dead, and one of the pioneers was wounded.

"Grimaud," said Athos, still on the breach, "another musket!"

Grimaud instantly obeyed. The three friends had reloaded their arms, another discharge followed the second, the corporal and two pioneers fell dead, the rest of the troop took to flight.

"Now, gentlemen, for a sortie!" cried Athos.

And the four friends rushed out of the fort, gained the field of battle, picked up the muskets of the four soldiers, and the corporal's bayonet, and, convinced that the fugitives would not stop till they got to the city, turned again toward the bastion, bearing with them the trophies of their victory.

"Reload the muskets, Grimaud," said Athos, "and we, gentlemen, will go on with our breakfast and resume our conversation. Where were we?"

"I remember," said D'Artagnan; "you were saying that after demanding my head of the cardinal, Milady left the shores of France. Where is she going?" added he, considerably interested in the journey which Milady was taking.

"She is going to England," said Athos.

"What for?"

"To assassinate the Duke of Buckingham, or cause him to be assassinated."

D'Artagnan uttered an exclamation of surprise and indignation.

"But this is infamous!" cried he.

"I beg you to believe," said Athos, "that I care very little about that. Now you have done, Grimaud, take our corporal's bayonet, tie a napkin to it, and plant it at the top of our bastion, that these rebel Rochellais may see that they have to deal with brave and loyal soldiers of the king."

Grimaud obeyed without replying

An instant afterwards the white flag was floating over the heads of the four friends, a thunder of applause saluted its appearance, half the camp was at the barrier

‘ But why do you care so little whether she kill Buckingham or not ? The duke is our friend ’

“ The duke is an Englishman, the duke is fighting against us, let her do what she likes with the duke, I care no more for him than for an empty bottle ”

“ One moment ! ” said D’Artagnan, “ I will not give up Buckingham in this way, he gave us some very fine horses ’

“ And, above all, some very handsome saddles,” said Porthos, who at that very moment was wearing the lace of his on his cloak

‘ Besides,” said Aramis, “ God desires the conversion, and not the death, of a sinner ”

“ Amen ! ” said Athos, “ and we will return to that subject later, if such be your pleasure, but what I was most anxious about at the moment—and I am sure you will understand me, D’Artagnan—was to secure from this woman a kind of carte-blanche, which she had extorted from the cardinal, and by means of which she could with impunity get rid of you and perhaps of us ”

“ This creature must be a fiend ! ” said Porthos, holding out his plate to Aramis, who was carving a fowl

“ And this carte-blanche,” asked D’Artagnan, “ this carte-blanche—has she it still ? ”

“ No, I got it, I will not say without trouble, for if I did I should tell a lie ”

‘ My dear Athos, I shall give up counting the number of times you have saved my life.’’

“ And you have that letter of the cardinal’s ? ” exclaimed Aramis

“ Here it is,” said Athos

And he took the precious paper from his coat pocket.

D'Artagnan unfolded it with a hand the trembling of which he did not even attempt to conceal, and read

"By my order and for the good of the State, the bearer hereof has done what he has done

"August 5, 1628

RICHELIEU "

"It is, in fact," said Aramis, "a complete absolution "

"That paper must be torn in pieces," said D'Artagnan, who fancied he read in it his death sentence

"On the contrary," said Athos, "it must be preserved most carefully, I would not give up this paper for as many gold pieces as would cover it "

"And what is she going to do now ? " asked the young man

"Well," replied Athos carelessly, "she is probably going to write to the cardinal that a blackguardly musketeer, named Athos, has taken her safe conduct from her by force She will advise him, in the same letter, to get rid at the same time both of him and of his two friends, Aramis and Porthos The cardinal will remember that these are the same men who are always crossing his path Then, some fine morning, he will have D'Artagnan arrested, and for fear he should feel bored in his loneliness, he will have us sent to keep him company in the Bastille "

"There, now ! You seem to me to be making very dull jokes, my dear fellow," said Porthos

"I am not joking," said Athos

"Do you know," said Porthos, "that to twist that cursed Milady's neck would be less of a sin than to twist the necks of these poor Huguenots, who have committed no other crimes than singing in French the Psalms that we sing in Latin ? "

"What says the abbé ? " asked Porthos quietly

"I say I am entirely of Porthos's opinion," replied Aramis.

"And I too," said D'Artagnan

"Fortunately, she is a good way off," said Porthos, "for I confess she would make me feel very uncomfortable if she were here "

‘ She makes me feel uncomfortable in England as well as in France,’ said Athos

“ She makes me feel uncomfortable wherever she is,” said D’Artagnan

But when you had her in your power, why did you not drown her, or strangle her, or hang her ? ” said Porthos , “ it is only the dead who don’t come back again ”

‘ You think so, do you, Porthos ? ” replied the musketeer, with a sad smile

“ I have an idea,” said D’Artagnan

‘ What is it ? ” cried the musketeers

‘ To arms ! ” shouted Grimaud

The young men sprang up and seized their muskets

This time a small troop advanced, consisting of from twenty to twenty-five men , but now they were not pioneers, but soldiers of the garrison

‘ Shall we return to the camp ? ” suggested Porthos , “ I don’t think the sides are equal.”

“ Impossible, for three reasons,” replied Athos , ‘ the first is, that we have not finished breakfast , the second is, that we have still some very important things to talk about , and the third is, that it yet lacks ten minutes before the hour will be over ”

‘ Well, then,” said Aramis, “ we must think out a plan of battle ”

It’s very simple,” replied Athos , “ as soon as the enemy are within range, we must fire on them , if they continue to advance, we must fire again , we must fire as long as we have loaded guns , then if the rest of the troop persist in mounting to the assault, we will allow the besiegers to reach the ditch, and then we will push down on their heads that stup of wall which seems to stand only by a miracle of equilibrium ”

“ Bravo ! ” cried Porthos , “ decidedly, Athos, you were born to be a general, and the cardinal, who fancies himself a great captain, is nothing to you ”

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "no divided attention, I beg; let each one pick out his man"

"I cover mine," said D'Artagnan

"And I mine," said Porthos

"And I do likewise," said Aramis

"Fire, then!" said Athos

The four muskets made but one report, but four men fell
The drum immediately beat, and the little troop advanced in double-quick time

Then the musket-shots were repeated, without regularity, but always aimed with the same correctness. Nevertheless, as if they were aware of the numerical weakness of the friends, the Rochellais continued to advance at the run

At every three shots at least two men fell, but those who remained did not slacken their advance

On reaching the foot of the bastion, there were still about fifteen of the enemy. A last discharge welcomed them, but did not stop them. They leaped into the ditch, and prepared to scale the breach

"Now, my friends," said Athos, "finish them at a blow, to the wall! to the wall!"

And the four friends, aided by Grimaud, pushed with the barrels of their muskets an enormous stretch of the wall, which bent over as if swayed by the wind, and, giving way from its base, fell with a horrible crash into the ditch. Then a fearful cry was heard, a cloud of dust mounted toward the sky,—and all was over!

Can we have destroyed them all, from the first to the last?" said Athos

"Faith, it seems so," said D'Artagnan

No," cried Porthos, "there are three or four, limping away"

In fact, three or four of these unfortunate men, covered with dirt and blood, were escaping along the trench, and were making for the city. These were all that were left of the little troop.

Athos looked at his watch.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we have been here an hour, and our wager is won, but we will be fair players. Besides, D'Artagnan has not told us his idea yet."

And the musketeer, with his usual coolness, went and sat down again before the remains of the breakfast.

"My idea?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, you said you had an idea," said Athos.

"Oh! I remember now," said D'Artagnan. "Well, I will go to England again, I will go and find Buckingham."

"You shall not do that, D'Artagnan," said Athos coolly.

"And why not? Have I not been there once?"

"Yes, but at that period we were not at war, at that period Buckingham was an ally, and not an enemy. What you now contemplate doing would amount to treason."

D'Artagnan perceived the force of this reasoning, and was silent.

"But," said Porthos, "I think I have an idea."

"Silence for M. Porthos's idea!" said Aramis.

"I will ask leave of absence of M. de Tréville, on some pretext or other, which you must invent, as I am not very clever at pretexts. Milady does not know me, I will get access to her without her suspecting who I am, and when I catch the sweet creature, I will strangle her."

"Well," replied Athos, "I am inclined to approve of M. Porthos's idea."

"For shame!" said Aramis, "kill a woman! No, listen to me, I have a genuine idea."

"Let us have your idea, Aramis," said Athos, who had a great respect for the young musketeer.

"We must inform the queen."

"Ah, 'pon my word! yes," said Porthos and D'Artagnan at the same time, "I think we are getting at the proper means."

"Inform the queen!" said Athos, "and how? Have we any friends at court? Can we send any one to Paris without

it being known in the camp ? It is a hundred and forty leagues from here to Paris , before our letter reached Angers we should be in a dungeon ”

“ As to sending a letter safely to her Majesty,” said Aramis, “ I will take that on myself I know a clever person at Tours— ”

Aramis stopped on seeing Athos smile

“ Well, do you not approve of this means, Athos ? ” asked D’Artagnan.

“ I do not reject it altogether,” said Athos , “ but I wish to remind Aramis that he cannot quit the camp, and that no one but one of ourselves can be trusted , that two hours after the messenger has set out, all the spies and agents of the cardinal will know your letter by heart, and you and your clever person will be arrested And besides, the queen would merely save Buckingham, but would take no heed of us at all ”

“ Gentlemen,” said D’Artagnan, “ what Athos says is full of sense ”

“ Aha ! ” exclaimed Athos, suddenly, “ what’s going on in the city ? ”

“ They are sounding the alarm ”

The four friends listened, and all heard distinctly the sound of the drum

“ You will see they are going to send a whole regiment against us,” said Athos.

“ You don’t think of holding out against a whole regiment, do you ? ” inquired Porthos

“ Why not ? ” said the musketeer “ I feel myself quite in the humour for it , and I would hold out against an army if we had only taken the precaution to bring a dozen more bottles of wine ”

“ ‘Pon my word, that drum is getting nearer,” said D’Artagnan.

“ Let it come,” said Athos “ It is a quarter of an hour’s journey from here to the city, consequently a quarter of an hour’s journey from the city here That is more time than

we need to devise a plan. If we leave this place, we shall never find another so suitable. Ah! stop! I have it, gentlemen,—the very idea has just occurred to me.”

“Tell us then.”

“First allow me to give Guimard one or two indispensable orders.”

Athos made a sign for his lackey to draw near.

“Guimard,” said Athos, pointing to the bodies which lay in the bastion, “take those gentlemen, set them up against the wall, put their hats on their heads, and their guns in their hands.”

“Oh, great man!” cried D’Artagnan, “I understand now.”

“You understand?” said Porthos.

“And do you understand, Guimard?” said Aramis.

Guimard made a sign in the affirmative.

“That’s all that’s necessary,” said Athos, “now for my idea.”

“Yes! yes! Athos’s idea!” cried Aramis and D’Artagnan at the same time.

“This Milady—this woman—this creature—this fiend has a brother-in-law, I think you told me, D’Artagnan?”

“Yes, I know him very well, and I also believe that he has no very warm affection for his sister-in-law.”

“There is no harm in that, if he detested her, it would be all the better,” replied Athos.

“In that case, we are as well off as we could wish.”

“And now,” said Porthos, “I should like to understand what Guimard is up to.”

Silence. Porthos!” said Aramis.

“What is her brother-in-law’s name?”

“Lord Winter.”

“Where is he now?”

“He returned to London at the first rumour of war.”

“Well, he’s just the man we want,” said Athos, “we must warn him. We will send him word that his sister-in-law is on

the point of assassinating some one, and we will beg him not to lose sight of her. He will put his sister-in-law in some place of confinement, and we shall be left in peace."

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "until she gets out again."

"Ah, pon my word!" said Athos, "you require too much, D'Artagnan, I have given you the best I was capable of, and I cannot improve on it."

"But I think it would be still better," said Aramis, "to inform the queen and Lord Winter at the same time."

"Yes, but who is to carry the letter to Tours, and who the letter to London?"

"I answer for Bazin," said Aramis.

And I for Planchet," said D'Artagnan.

"That is so," said Porthos, "if we cannot leave the camp, our lackeys may."

"To be sure they may," said Aramis, "and this very day we will write the letters, give them money, and they will set out."

"We will give them money?" replied Athos. "Have you any money?"

The four friends looked at one another, and a cloud came over the brows which had been for an instant so cheerful.

"Quick!" cried D'Artagnan, "I see black and red specks moving yonder. You were talking about a regiment, Athos? It is a whole army!"

"Pon my word," said Athos, "yes, there they are. Do you see the sneaks coming without drums or trumpets. Ah! have you finished, Grimaud?"

Grimaud made a sign in the affirmative, and pointed to a dozen bodies which he had set up in the most picturesque attitudes, some carrying arms, others appearing to aim, and the rest sword in hand.

"Bravo!" said Athos, "that does honour to your imagination."

"Very good," said Porthos; "I should like, however, to be enlightened."

"Let us get away first," said D'Artagnan, "and you can be enlightened afterwards"

"One moment, gentlemen, one moment, give Grimaud time to clear away the things"

"Look!" said Aramis "the black and red specks are growing visibly larger, I agree with D'Artagnan—I believe we have no time to lose if we are to regain our camp"

"Faith!" said Athos, "I have nothing more to say against a retreat, our wager called for an hour, we have stayed an hour and a half Nothing can be said, let us be off, gentlemen, let us be off!"

Grimaud had already gone on with the basket and the dessert The four friends followed, and had gone about ten paces

"Ah!" cried Athos "What in Heaven's name shall we do now, gentlemen?"

"Have you forgotten anything," said Aramis

"The flag! We must not leave a flag in the enemy's hands, even though that flag be but a napkin"

And Athos ran back to the bastion, mounted the platform, and brought off the flag, but as the Rochellais had come within musket range, they opened a terrible fire on him, since he appeared to be exposing himself for the pleasure of it

But Athos seemed to bear a charmed life, the balls whistled all around him, not one hit him He waved his flag, turning his back to the city guards and saluting those of the camp On both sides loud shouts arose—on the one side cries of anger, on the other shout of acclamation

A second discharge followed the first, and three balls passing through the napkin made it a real flag Shouts were heard from the camp "Come down! come down!"

Athos came down, his friends were anxiously waiting for him

"Come on, Athos, come on!" cried D'Artagnan, "now we have found everything except money, it would be stupid to be killed"

But Athos continued to march majestically, in spite of all

the advice his companions gave him , and they, finding their advice wasted, regulated their pace by his

Grimaud and his basket had gone on far in advance, and both were out of reach of the balls

An instant later a furious firing was heard.

"What's that?" asked Porthos, "what are they firing at now? I hear no balls, and I can see no one!"

"They're firing on our dead men," replied Athos

"But our dead men will not return their fire"

"You are right, then they will fancy it is an ambuscade, they will deliberate, and by the time they find out the joke we shall be out of range That's why it is useless to work oneself up into an apoplexy by going too fast"

"Oh, I understand now," said the astonished Porthos

"That's very lucky," said Athos, shrugging his shoulders

The French, seeing the four friends returning leisurely, raised shouts of applause

At length a fresh discharge was heard, and this time the balls came rattling among the stones around the four friends, and whistling sharply in their ears The Rochellais had just taken possession of the bastion

"What bunglers!" said Athos, "how many have we killed of them—a dozen?"

"Or fifteen?"

"How many did we crush under the wall?"

"Eight or ten"

"And in exchange for all that, not a scratch! Ah! but what is the matter with your hand, D'Artagnan? It looks to me as if it were bleeding"

"Oh, it's nothing," said D'Artagnan.

"A spent ball?"

"Not even that"

"What is it, then?"

We have said that Athos loved D'Artagnan as though he were his son, and this stern and unbending man sometimes felt a parent's anxiety for him.

‘ Only grazed a little,” replied D’Artagnan, “ my fingers were caught between the stone of the wall and the stone of my ring, and the skin was broken ”

“ That comes of wearing diamonds, my master,” said Athos disdainfully

“ Ah, to be sure,” cried Porthos, “ of course it is a diamond, why on earth, then, do we plague ourselves about money, when we have a diamond ? ”

“ Why, that’s a fact ! ” said Aramis

“ Well thought of, Porthos, this time you have really had an idea ’

“ Certainly I have,” said Porthos, drawing himself up proudly at Athos’s compliment, “ since there is a diamond, let us sell it ”

‘ But,” said D’Artagnan, “ it is the queen’s diamond ”

“ All the more reason why it should be sold,” replied Athos, ‘ as the queen is saving Buckingham, her lover, nothing could be more just, the queen is saving us, her friends, nothing more reasonable, let us sell the diamond What says Monsieur l’Abbé ? I don’t ask Porthos his opinion has been given ”

‘ Why, I think,” said Aramis, “ that since his ring is not a love-token, D’Artagnan may sell it ”

“ My dear Aramis, you speak like theology personified Your opinion, then, is— ”

“ Sell the diamond ”

“ Well, then,” said D’Artagnan gaily, “ let us sell the diamond, and say no more about it ”

The fusillade was still going on, but the friends were out of range, and the Rochellais only fired to soothe their feelings

“ Faith ! it was time that idea came into Porthos’s head— here we are in camp Therefore, gentlemen, not a word more of this affair We are observed—they are coming to meet us, we shall be borne in triumph ”

In fact, as we have said, the whole camp was in commotion. More than two thousand persons had been watching this

fortunate escapade of the four friends, an escapade the real motive of which no one guessed. Nothing was heard but cries of "Hurrah for the musketeers! Hurrah for the guards!" M de Busigny was the first to come and shake Athos by the hand, and acknowledge that he had lost his wager. The diagoon and the Swiss followed him, and all their comrades followed the diagoon and the Swiss. There was no end to the congratulations, hand-shakings, and embraces, there was inextinguishable laughter at the Rochellais. The tumult at length became so great that the cardinal fancied there was a riot, and sent La Houdinière, the captain of his guards, to find out what was going on.

The exploit was described to the messenger in the highest terms of enthusiasm.

"Well?" asked the cardinal, on La Houdinière's return.

"Well, monseigneur," replied the latter, "three musketeers and a guardsman laid a wager with M de Busigny that they would go and breakfast in the Bastion Saint-Gervais, and while at breakfast they held it for two hours against the enemy, and have killed I don't know how many Rochellais."

"Did you inquire the names of the three musketeers?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"What are their names?"

"MM Athos, Porthos, and Aramis."

"Always these three brave fellows!" murmured the cardinal. "And the guard?"

"M d'Artagnan."

"Still that young scapegrace. Positively, these four men must be mine."

That same evening the cardinal spoke to M de Tréville of the morning's exploit, which was the talk of the whole camp. M de Tréville, who had heard the account of the adventure from the mouths of the heroes themselves, related it in all its details to his Eminence, not forgetting the episode of the napkin.

"Very well, Monsieur de Tréville," said the cardinal,

' pray let me have that napkin I will have three fleur-de-lis embroidered on it in gold, and will give it to your company as a standard '

" Monseigneur," said M de Tréville, " that will hardly be doing justice to the guards M d'Artagnan is not mine, he serves under M des Essarts "

" Well, then, take him," said the cardinal, " when four men are so much attached to one another, it is only fair that they should serve in the same company "

That same evening M de Tréville announced this good news to the three musketeers and D'Artagnan, inviting all four to breakfast with him next morning

D'Artagnan was beside himself with joy We know that the dream of his life had been to become a musketeer

The three friends were likewise greatly delighted

' Faith ' " said D'Artagnan to Athos, " that was a magnificent idea of yours ' As you said, we have acquired glory, and were enabled to carry on a conversation of the greatest importance "

" Which we can resume now without anybody suspecting us, for we shall henceforth pass for cardinalists "

That evening D'Artagnan went to present his compliments to M des Essarts, and inform him of his promotion

M des Essarts, who esteemed D'Artagnan, offered him any help he required, as this change of corps would entail expenses for outfit

D'Artagnan respectfully declined, but thinking the opportunity a good one, he begged him to have the diamond he put into his hand valued, as he wished to turn it into money

By eight o'clock next morning, M des Essarts's valet came to D'Artagnan's lodging, and gave him a purse containing seven thousand livres

This was the price of the queen's diamond.

[D'Artagnan despatches his servant, Planchet, to England to warn Lord Winter of Milady's mission, and on landing she is

taken into custody and put under the guard of a fanatical young Puritan officer, named Felton. Milady, however, succeeds in corrupting even Felton and in persuading him to effect her return to France and to assassinate the Duke of Buckingham at Portsmouth. D'Artagnan is informed of the whereabouts of Madame Bonacieux, but he and his friends reach the convent, where she is, only to find that she has been poisoned by Milady. In company with Lord Winter, and an unknown man in a red cloak, the four friends pursue and overtake Milady. They hold judgment upon her and condemn her to death. The sentence is duly executed by the unknown in the red cloak, the man whom Milady had first and most deeply wronged.]

CONCLUSION

ON the sixth of the following month, the king, in compliance with the promise he had made the cardinal to leave Paris and to return to Rochelle, set out from his capital, unable to recover from his amazement at the news which was just beginning to spread abroad, that Buckingham had been assassinated.

The king's joy had been at first very lively, but he soon became dull and indisposed again, his brow was never serene for any length of time. He felt that by returning to his camp he was about to become once more a slave, and yet nevertheless he returned. For him the cardinal was a fascinating serpent, and he a bird flying from branch to branch without being able to escape.

So the return to Rochelle was profoundly dull. Our four friends, in particular, astonished their comrades. They travelled together, side by side, with melancholy eyes and hanging heads. Athos alone, from time to time, raised his broad brow. A flash kindled in his eyes, a bitter smile passed over his lips. Then, like his comrades, he again resumed his meditation.

Whenever the escort arrived in a city, as soon as they had escorted the king to his lodgings, the four friends either retired to their own quarters, or to some secluded tavern, where they neither drank nor played. They only conversed in low tones, looking round attentively to see that no one overheard them.

One day, when the king had halted on the way, to fly his hawks, and the four friends, according to their custom, instead of following the sport, had stopped at a tavern on the high-road, a man, riding full speed from Rochelle, pulled up at the door to drink a glass of wine, and glanced into the room where the four musketeers were sitting at table.

' Ha ! Monsieur d'Artagnan ! ' said he, " isn't that you I see in there ? "

D'Artagnan raised his head and uttered a cry of joy. It was the man he called his phantom, it was the stranger of Meung.

D'Artagnan drew his sword and sprang toward the door.

But this time, instead of eluding him, the stranger leaped from his horse and advanced to meet D'Artagnan.

" Ah ! sir ! " said the young man, " I meet you, then, at last ! This time you shall not escape me ! "

" Neither is it my intention, sir, for on this occasion I was seeking you. I arrest you in the name of the king. I tell you that you must surrender your sword to me, sir, and that without resistance. Your life depends upon it. I warn you ! "

' But who are you ? ' demanded D'Artagnan, lowering the point of his sword, but without yet surrendering it.

" I am the Chevalier de Rochefort," answered the stranger, ' Cardinal Richelieu's equerry, and I have orders to conduct you to his Eminence. "

" We are returning to his Eminence, my lord," said Athos, advancing, " and you will be good enough to accept M. d'Artagnan's word that he will go straight to Rochelle. "

" I must place him in the hands of guards who will take him to camp. "

"We will serve as his guards, sir, on our word as gentlemen, but, on our word as gentlemen, likewise, added Athos, "M d'Artagnan shall not leave us"

The Chevalier de Rochefort cast a glance behind, and saw that Porthos and Aramis had taken their places between him and the door. He perceived that he was completely at the mercy of these four men.

"Gentlemen," said he, "if M d'Artagnan will surrender his sword to me and join his word to yours, I shall be satisfied with your promise to convey M d'Artagnan to the cardinal's quarters."

"You have my word, sir, and here is my sword."

"This suits me very well," said Rochefort, "as I must continue my journey."

"If it is to rejoin Milady," said Athos coolly, "it is useless; you will not find her."

"What has become of her?" asked Rochefort eagerly.

"Come back with us to the camp, and you shall know."

Rochefort remained thoughtful for a moment, then, as they were only a day's journey from Surgères, where the cardinal was coming to meet the king, he resolved to follow Athos's advice and go back with them.

This return gave him the advantage likewise of watching over his prisoner.

They resumed their journey.

At three o'clock the next afternoon they reached Surgères. The cardinal was there awaiting Louis XIII. The minister and the king exchanged numerous caresses, congratulating each other on the fortunate chance which had freed France from the implacable enemy who had been rousing all Europe against her. After this, the cardinal, who had been informed by Rochefort that D'Artagnan was arrested, and who was anxious to see him, took leave of the king, inviting him to come the next day to view the works on the dyke, which were now complete.

The cardinal, on returning in the evening to his head-

quarters at the budge of La Pierre, found D'Artagnan without his sword, and the three musketeers armed, standing before the door of the house which he was occupying. He looked at them sternly, and made a sign with his eye and hand for D'Artagnan to follow him.

D'Artagnan obeyed.

"We shall wait for you, D'Artagnan," said Athos, loud enough for the cardinal to hear him.

His Eminence kept on his way without uttering a single word.

D'Artagnan entered after the cardinal, and behind D'Artagnan the door was guarded.

His Eminence went to the room which served him as a study, and made a sign to Rochefort to bring in the young musketeer.

Rochefort obeyed and retired.

D'Artagnan remained alone before the cardinal. This was his second interview with Richelieu, and he afterwards confessed that he felt sure it would be his last.

Richelieu remained standing, leaning against the mantelpiece. A table was between him and D'Artagnan.

"Sir," said the cardinal, "you have been arrested by my orders."

"So I have been told, monseigneur."

"Do you know why?"

"No, monseigneur, for the only thing for which I could be arrested is still unknown to your Eminence."

Richelieu looked steadfastly at the young man.

"Indeed?" said he, "what does that mean?"

"If monseigneur will first tell me what crimes I am charged with, I will tell him the deeds that I have done."

"You are charged with crimes that have brought down far loftier heads than yours, sir," said the cardinal.

"What are they, monseigneur?" demanded D'Artagnan, with a calmness that astonished the cardinal himself.

"You are charged with having corresponded with the

enemies of the kingdom You are charged with having surprised state secrets You are charged with having tried to thwart your general's plans "

" And who charges me with this, monseigneur ? " said D'Artagnan, who suspected the accusation came from Milady " A woman branded by the law of the country , a woman who was married to one man in France and to another in England , a woman who poisoned her second husband, and who attempted to poison me ' "

" What is all this, sir ? " cried the cardinal, astonished , " and what woman are you speaking of thus ? "

' Of Milady de Winter," replied D'Artagnan ; " yes, of Milady de Winter, of whose many crimes your Eminence was doubtless ignorant when you honoured her with your confidence "

" Sir," said the cardinal, " if Milady de Winter has committed the crimes which you say, she shall be punished."

" She is punished, monseigneur "

" And who has punished her ? "

" We "

" Is she in prison ? "

" She is dead "

" Dead ! " repeated the cardinal, who could not believe what he heard " Dead ! Did you say she was dead ? "

" Three times she tried to kill me, and I pardoned her. But when she killed Madame Bonacieux, my friends and I took her, tried, condemned and executed her "

D'Artagnan then related the poisoning of Madame Bonacieux in the Carmelite convent of Béthune, the trial in the lonely house, and the execution of Milady on the banks of the Lys.

A shudder ran through the cardinal's body, and yet he did not shudder readily

But suddenly, as if under the influence of a secret thought, the cardinal's face, till that moment gloomy, began gradually to grow serene, and at last recovered the most perfect serenity.

‘ So,” said the cardinal, in a tone the mildness of which contrasted with the severity of his words, ‘ you have constituted yourselves judges, forgetting that they who punish without license to punish are assassins ? ’ ”

“ Monseigneur, I swear to you that I have never for an instant had the intention of defending my head against you I will submit to the punishment your Eminence may please to inflict upon me I do not hold life dear enough to be afraid of death ”

‘ Yes, I know you are a man of courage, sir,” said the cardinal, in a tone almost affectionate, “ I can therefore tell you beforehand you shall be tried, even condemned ”

‘ Another might reply to your Eminence that he had his pardon in his pocket I shall content myself with saying, Command, monseigneur, I am ready ”

‘ Your pardon ? ’ ” said Richelieu, surprised

“ Yes, monseigneur,” said D’Artagnan

“ And signed by whom—by the king ? ”

And the cardinal pronounced these words with a singular expression of contempt

‘ No, by your Eminence ”

By me ? You are mad, sir ! ”

‘ Monseigneur will doubtless recognize his own writing ”

And D’Artagnan presented to the cardinal the precious paper which Athos had forced from Milady, and which he had given to D’Artagnan to serve him as a safeguard.

His Eminence took the paper and read in a slow voice, dwelling on every syllable -

‘ “ *By my order and for the good of the State the bearer hereof has done what he has done*

At the camp of Rochelle, August 5, 1628

“ RICHELIEU ”

The cardinal, after reading these two lines, fell into deep thought, but he did not return the paper to D’Artagnan

“ He is meditating by what sort of punishment he will put

me to death," said D'Artagnan to himself "Very well ! On my faith, he shall see how a gentleman can die !"

Richeieu still continued thinking, twisting and untwisting the paper in his hands. At last he raised his head, fixed his eagle look upon D'Artagnan's frank, loyal, intelligent face, read on his face all the suffering he had endured, and reflected for the third or fourth time what a future this young man had before him, and what resources his activity, his courage, and his understanding could devote to a good master.

On the other hand, Milady's crimes, her strength of mind, and her infernal genius had more than once terrified him. He felt something like a secret joy at being for ever rid of such a dangerous accomplice.

He slowly tore the paper which D'Artagnan had generously placed in his hand.

'I am lost !' said D'Artagnan to himself.

And he bowed low before the cardinal, like a man who says, "Lord, thy will be done !"

The cardinal went to a table, and, without sitting down, wrote a few lines on a sheet of parchment two-thirds of which was already filled up and affixed his seal to it.

'That is my condemnation,' thought D'Artagnan, "he will spare me the tedium of the Bastille or the slow process of a trial. It's another proof of his kindness."

"Here, sir," said the cardinal to the young man, "I have taken from you one signed blank and I give you another. The name is wanting in this commission, and you yourself will write it in."

D'Artagnan took the paper hesitatingly, and cast his eyes over it.

It was a lieutenant's commission in the musketeers.

D'Artagnan fell at the cardinal's feet.

"Monseigneur," said he, "my life is yours ! Henceforward dispose of it. But I do not deserve this favour which you bestow on me, I have three friends who are more meritorious and more worthy—"

"You are an honest fellow, D'Artagnan," interrupted the cardinal, tapping him familiarly on the shoulder, charmed at having subdued this rebellious nature. "Do with this commission what you will. Only remember that, though the name is left blank, I give it to you."

"I shall never forget it," replied D'Artagnan, "your Eminence may be certain of that."

The cardinal turned round and said in a loud voice

"Rochefort!"

The chevalier, who doubtless was behind the door, entered immediately

"Rochefort," said the cardinal, "you see M. d'Artagnan. I receive him among the number of my friends. Shake hands, then, and be prudent, if you wish to preserve your heads."

Rochefort and D'Artagnan saluted each other distantly, but the cardinal was observing them with his vigilant eye.

They left the chamber at the same time.

"We shall meet again, shall we not, sir?"

"When you please," said D'Artagnan.

"An opportunity will offer," replied Rochefort.

"What's that?" said the cardinal, opening the door.

The two men smiled at each other, shook hands, and bowed to his Eminence. D'Artagnan then rejoined his three friends.

"We were beginning to grow impatient," said Athos.

"Here I am, my friends," replied D'Artagnan, "not only free, but in favour."

"When will you tell us about it?"

"This evening."

Accordingly, that same evening D'Artagnan repaired to the quarters of Athos, whom he found in a fair way of emptying his bottle of Spanish wine, an occupation which he religiously fulfilled every night.

He related what had taken place between the cardinal and himself, and, drawing the commission from his pocket,—

"Here, my dear Athos," said he, "this naturally belongs to you."

Athos smiled his sweet, fascinating smile

"My friend," said he, "for Athos this is too much Keep the commission—it is yours Alas! it has cost you enough."

D'Artagnan left Athos's room and went to Porthos's

He found him dressed in a magnificent coat covered with splendid embroidery, looking at himself in a glass

'Aha!' exclaimed Porthos, "it is you, dear friend How do you think these garments fit me?"

'Wonderfully well,' said D'Artagnan, "but I have come to offer you a suit which will fit you still better"

'What's that?' asked Porthos

That of a lieutenant in the musketeers"

D'Artagnan related to Porthos his interview with the cardinal, and, taking the commission from his pocket,—

Here, my dear friend," said he, "write your name in it, and become my officer"

Porthos cast his eyes over the commission, and returned it to D'Artagnan, to the young man's great astonishment

'Yes,' said he, "yes, that would flatter me very much, but I should not have time enough to enjoy the distinction I am going to be married Look here—I was trying on my wedding suit Keep your lieutenancy, my dear fellow, keep it"

And he returned the commission to D'Artagnan

The young man entered Aramis's apartment

He found him kneeling before a praying-desk with his head leaning on an open prayer-book

He described to him his interview with the cardinal, and, for the third time drawing his commission from his pocket,—

'You, our friend, our intelligence, our invisible protector,' said he, "accept this commission You have deserved it more than any one by your wisdom and your counsels, which were always followed by such happy results"

"Alas! dear friend," said Aramis, "our recent adventures have entirely disgusted me with life and with the sword. This time my determination is irrevocably taken After the siege I shall enter a monastery. Keep the commission,

D'Artagnan The profession of arms suits you You will be a brave and gallant officer "

D'Artagnan, his eye moist with gratitude and beaming with joy, went back to Athos, whom he found still at table, contemplating the charms of his last glass of Malaga by the light of his lamp

' Well,' said he, " and they also have refused this commission ! "

" Because, dear friend, no one is more worthy of it than yourself "

And he took a pen, wrote D'Artagnan's name on the commission, and returned it to him.

NOTES

- P 2, l 5 **cusses** : armour to cover the thighs.
- P 2, l 8 **maxillary muscles** : the muscles of the jaw
- P 2, l 20 **Béarn** : a small province in the extreme south-west of France
- P 2, l 32 **Rosinante** · the name given by Don Quixote in Cervantes' famous romance (published 1605-1615) to his raw-boned steed. The name though high-sounding actually means "formerly a drudge-horse"
- P 8, l 24 **gasconade** · a vaunting boast, for which the natives of Gascony were notorious
- P 14, l 22 **a larding pin** · an instrument used for inserting strips of bacon in other kinds of meat before cooking
- P 15, l 22 **pistole** : a Spanish gold coin worth about 18s.
- P 16, l 22 **the Luxembourg** · a palace built by the queen-mother, Marie de' Medici
- P 16, l 20 **The Louvre** was originally built by Philip Augustus at the beginning of the thirteenth century. This palace was pulled down by Francis I, and a new building was started by him in 1541. It was not completed till the reign of Louis XIV.
- P 20, l 24 **Dax, Pau, Tarbes** · The first and last were towns of Gascony. Pau was in the province of Béarn.
- P 22, l 25 **the edicts** · duelling had become so prevalent during the reign of Henry IV that a number of Royal Edicts had to be issued by him and his successor to check the practice.
- P 40, l 14 **gerfalcon** : a name applied especially to the Icelandic falcon.
- P 40, l 17 **tiercel or tercel** · properly means a male falcon, here perhaps signifies the goshawk.
- P 48, l 26 **Beaugency** : a town in central France on the Loire

- P 54, l 28 **secure me an abbey** an abbey consisted of a number of buildings, usually including a large church, occupied by monks. Over them was placed an abbot. The charge of an abbey was usually a lucrative and not very onerous post.
- P 64, l. 9 **representing St Martin giving half his cloak** St Martin (316-400 A.D.) was Bishop of Tours. It is said that once when at Amiens he divided his cloak with a beggar, and on the following night had a vision of Christ making known to the angels this act of charity as having been done to himself. St Martin became the patron saint of hospitality, hence his appearance on an inn sign.
- P 69, l 14 **Picards** inhabitants of Picardy in the north-east of France, in which the towns of St Omer and Calais were included.
- P 80, l 1 **embargo** an order prohibiting any foreign ships from entering, or any ships from leaving, the ports of a country.
- P 85, l 7 **holsters** : leather cases for holding pistols, either fixed to the saddle or attached to the belt.
- P 89, l 2 **ensign** : formerly a commissioned officer of the lowest grade in the infantry. In the time of Shakespeare the name had been corrupted into 'ancient'.
- P 92, l 26 **parliament** the Parliament or Parlement of Paris corresponded in no sense to the English Parliament. It was a civic body, but it possessed certain special privileges, one of which was the right of registering all royal edicts. Without such registration no edict was legally valid.
- P 94, l 8 **Duc de Guise** : Henry duc de Guise (1550-1588), with his brother the Cardinal de Guise, headed the Catholic party known as the League. He was one of the instigators of the massacre of St Bartholomew in 1572. He was assassinated with the connivance of the king, Henry III.
- P 94, l 28 **Comte de Tiorac, or de Toras** (1585-1636) made a marshal of France, 1630. Captured the Isle of Ré and successfully defended it against the English in 1627.
- P 95, l 22 **Duc d'Angoulême** (1573-1630) a natural son of Charles IX of France, was commander-in-chief at the opening of the siege of La Rochelle.

- P 97, 1 20 **arquebuse** also called in English *harquebus* an early form of portable gun, for firing, the barrel was supported on a tripod by a hook
- P 98, 1 19 **Duc d'Orléans** as the eldest brother of the French king he bore the courtesy title *Monsieur* Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, was one of Richelieu's worst enemies he was cowardly and treacherous and continually implicated in plots
- P 99, 1 5 **bastion** a projecting portion of a fortification or a wall, strengthened so as to be capable of defence against an attacking force
- P 99, 1 25 **revêtement**, or, in English, **revetment**—the retaining wall of the trench
- P 99, 1 30 **counterscarp** is the outer wall or slope of the ditch
- P 100, 1 16 **masked** : concealed from view D'Artagnan was concealed from the enemy in the bastion
- P 102, 1 2 **a hundred louis** a French gold coin worth about 20 fr., = about 16s 8d in normal times
- P 105, 1 23 **Bassompierre** (1579 1646) created a marshal, 1622, imprisoned in the Bastille by Richelieu, 1631-1642
- P 105, 1 23 **Schomberg**, Henry Count de (1575-1632) made a marshal 1625
- P 109, 1 16 **thee and thou** · used in the French only between near relatives, and to show attachment or devotion
- P 112, 1 35 **the queen's almoner** · the almoner was the official distributor of alms attached to a great household
- P 115, 1 36 **Balzempleu** a Swiss corruption of the French oath 'par le sang de Dieu'
- P 118, 1 33 "Let them flee to the deserts" Aramis is probably thinking of St Luke xvi 21, "Then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains"
- P 121, 1 32 **a kind of pepper-box** · a small turret shaped like a pepper-box
- P 126, 1 2 **the white flag** · the royal standard of France consisted of three fleur-de-lys in gold upon a white ground
- P 127, 1 29 **singing in French the Psalms that we sang in Latin**. The Huguenots, like all the Reformed Churches, used their native tongue for their church service, while Roman Catholics employ Latin

P 138, l 32 livres : old French money of account 1 livre = 20 sous, about equal to a modern franc

P. 143, l 29 Carmelite convent The Carmelites originated as an order in the middle of the twelfth century. They derived their name from Mount Carmel, where the originators of the order lived as hermits in caves. After 1240, when the Crusaders were driven out of Palestine, they migrated to Sicily, France and England, and became one of the four orders of Mendicant Friars. They were also known as the White Friars. Both men and women were admitted to the order.

QUESTIONS AND SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS

1 Give an account of what happened at the "Jolly Miller" on the first Monday of April 1625, putting the words into the mouth of one of the citizens of Meung, who is supposed to be relating what he saw to his wife

2 Describe briefly the character of Louis XIII

3 Relate the story of the fight between the three musketeers and D'Artagnan and the cardinal's guards, in the words which D'Artagnan would use in describing it to the king

4 Describe the various devices employed by the cardinal to prevent D'Artagnan and his three friends from reaching London

5 Compare the characters of the Duke of Buckingham and Cardinal Richelieu

6 Where are the following places, and in what way are they connected with the story Tarbes, Amiens, Saint-Valery, Villerot, St Germain, the Isle of Ré ?

7 Who were the Huguenots ? Why was Cardinal Richelieu so anxious to crush them ?

8 Who were the following, and what part do they play in the story the Chevalier de Rochefort, M de Tréville, Planchet, Bernajoux, Comte de Wardes, Master O'Reilly, Brusemont, M de la Trémouille, Grimaud ?

9 Compare D'Artagnan's character with that of the hero of any other historical romance you have read

10 Which of the three musketeers seems to you the most attractive character ? Give your reasons

11 Describe a day in the life of a musketeer or a guardsman in Paris in diary form

12 Tell in your own words any one of D'Artagnan's adventures

13 Describe a journey between London and Paris to-day, and contrast it with a similar journey in D'Artagnan's time.

154 QUESTIONS AND SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS

14 Make a map of the different places mentioned in *The Three Musketeers*, and trace in colour the journeys of D'Artagnan

15 Dramatise and act certain episodes (e.g. Breakfast in the Bastion Saint-Gervais)

It will also be found to add great interest to class-work if certain portions are read dramatically, the various characters in the story being allotted to individual pupils or to small groups of the class

BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The best account of Dumas and his work in English is that of Arthur B. Davidson entitled *Alexandre Dumas, his Life and Works* (1902). The article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. viii, may also be consulted. Shorter appreciations will be found in Andrew Lang's *Letters to Dead Authors* and in R. L. Stevenson's *Memories and Portraits*.

For the history of the period, J. B. Perkins' *Richelieu*, in the *Heroes of the Nations* series, is recommended, also R. Lodge's *Richelieu*, in the *Foreign Statesmen* series, and *The Seventeenth Century* (*The National History of France*) by Jacques Boulenger, English translation, 1920.

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